

The Rise of the Professional Gardener in Nineteenth-Century Devon: A Social and Economic History

Submitted by Rosemary Clare Greener, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History, April 2009.

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R. Clare Greener

Abstract

From the middle of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the First World War was the hey-day of the professional gardener. However, time has eroded the memory of these men and many of the gardens where they worked have disappeared or have been radically altered.

Most garden history has been written from an artistic or design perspective. No-one has studied the lesser head gardeners who worked in British gardens and estates, nor has there been a county study such as this which considers the working lives of gardeners from a commercial and practical point of view. Yet research using contemporary documents, such as the census and estate records, suggests the number of working gardeners increased significantly throughout the nineteenth century. Private gardeners worked in growing numbers of middle-class villa gardens, or for estate gardens which had returned to formal planting and mass bedding. Nurserymen contributed plant material to support garden owners' aspirations and ambitions to purchase the newest imports or fashionable hybrids and to furnish glasshouses and arboreta. Market gardeners supplied fruit, vegetables and flowers to satisfy the demands of a society which had changed from being largely rural to predominantly urban and began to specialise and produce for long distance markets.

Working gardeners were compelled to change their practices and products in order to accommodate scientific advances which fuelled a rise in interest in gardening across all classes of society. As the century progressed it became harder for a garden labourer to attain the position of head gardener. Increasingly, it was a man with some education who underwent a gruelling apprenticeship and training to reach the top of his profession. Different branches of the trade had their own hierarchy led by nurserymen at the top, jobbing gardeners and labourers at the bottom. This thesis discusses the growth of professionalism of gardeners and concludes that practical training was insufficient for success; self-education, determination, experience of a wide variety of gardens, good management skills, and sometimes luck were needed in order to succeed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AgHR</i>	<i>Agricultural History Review</i>
<i>AHEW</i>	<i>The Agrarian History of England and Wales</i>
<i>CL</i>	<i>Country Life</i>
<i>CRO</i>	Cornwall Record Office
<i>DC</i>	<i>Devonshire Chronicle</i>
<i>DRO</i>	Devon Record Office
<i>DWT</i>	<i>Devon Weekly Times</i>
<i>EcHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
<i>EFP</i>	<i>Exeter Flying Post</i>
<i>GC</i>	<i>Gardener's Chronicle</i>
<i>GH</i>	<i>Garden History</i>
<i>GM*</i>	<i>Gardener's Magazine</i>
<i>JRASE</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England</i>
<i>JRHS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society</i>
<i>NCCPG</i>	National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens
<i>NDRO</i>	North Devon Record Office
<i>PP</i>	Parliamentary Papers
<i>PRO</i>	Public Record Office
<i>RHS</i>	Royal Horticultural Society
<i>PWDRO</i>	Plymouth and West Devon Record Office
<i>SRO</i>	Somerset Record Office

* This is the abbreviation for J. C. Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* (1826-1843).

Shirley Hibberd's *Gardener's Magazine* (1862-1882) has been typed in full to distinguish between the two.

Conventions

Modern place-name spellings of parishes have been used throughout. Spellings of individuals' names have also been standardised to avoid confusion.

Acknowledgements

A project such as this would not have been possible without the help of a large number of people. I would like to thank the staff at The Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, North Devon Record Office, West Country Studies Library, Exeter University Library, Devon County Library, Devon and Exeter Institution and especially to the Devon Record Office whose staff have hunted for and patiently carried forth volume after volume of material.

Thank you also to the archivists at the Clinton Devon Estate Archive, Powderham Archive and Enville Hall Archive and at Essex Record Office, Cornwall Record Office and Somerset Record Office.

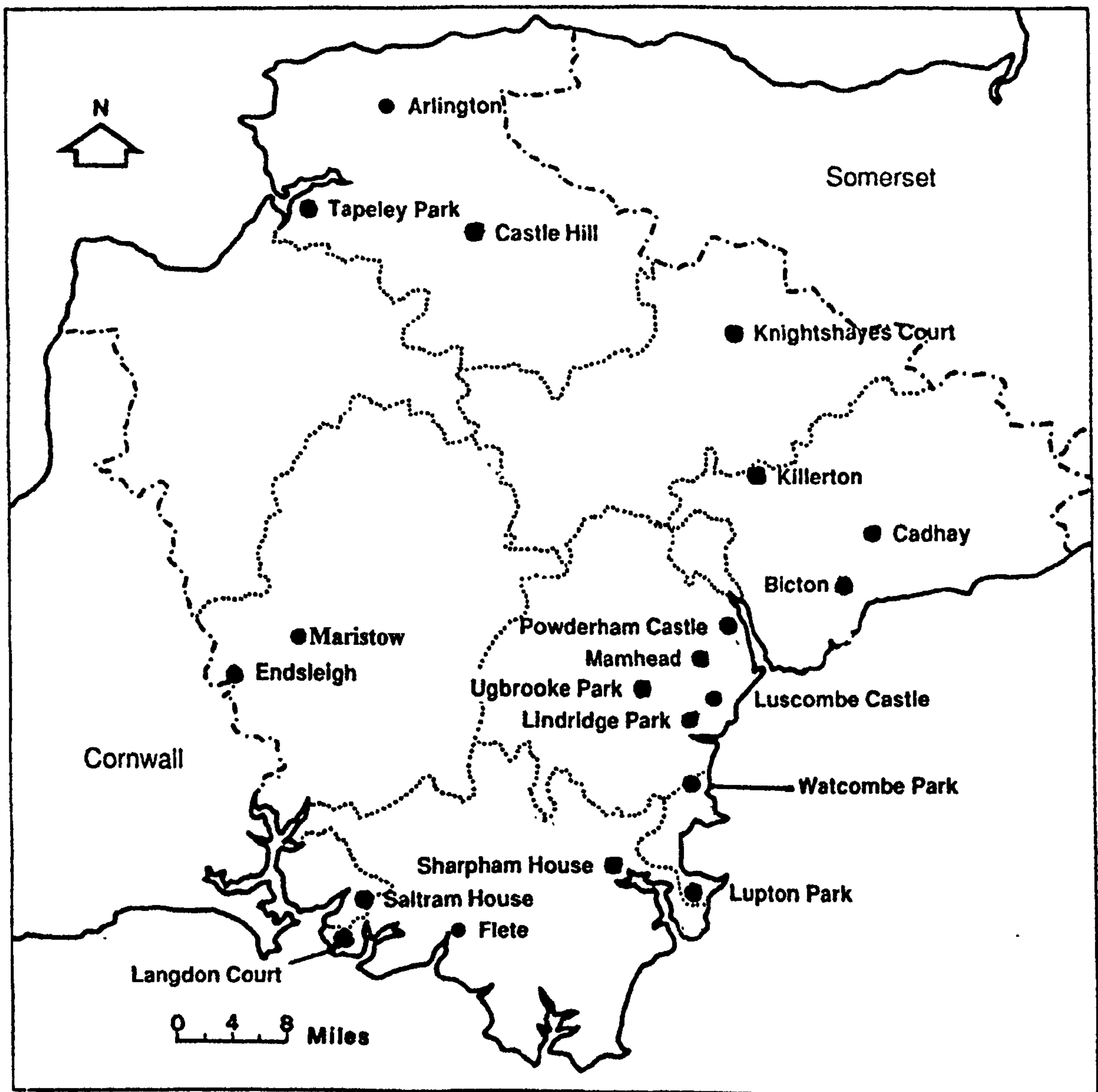
The help, encouragement and unfailing support of friends and colleagues has been essential and I would like to thank fellow students at the University of Exeter especially Pamela Richardson and Geoff Doye. Thank you to my colleagues especially committee members of Devon Gardens Trust and Friends of Devon's Archives.

Thank you to friends and a trusted support system who offered practical help and made constructive comments. In particular I would to thank Dr Todd Gray for the loan of books, Margaret Reed for help with research in North Devon, Carolyn Keep for sharing her extensive knowledge of Devon gardens. Thank you to all those who have helped with proof-reading. Many others who have given invaluable help shall be nameless, but I hope they will know who they are.

A special thank you to Mike Duffy for his patience, good humour and constructive help.

And last, but not least, thank you to my family, especially to Bill to whom this thesis is dedicated, who encouraged the beginning of the project but was, sadly, unable to see its completion.

Map of Devon showing gardens discussed in text



Source: Adapted from English Heritage, *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England: Devon* (1987).

INTRODUCTION

A gardener, to be one at all in the true acceptation of the term, must be a man of intelligence.¹

From the beginning of the nineteenth century gardening became an increasing part of the ethos of society, embodying scientific knowledge, respectability, healthy activity, productive work and family values. Ownership of a garden offered the potential for supplies of staple and luxury food, flowers for decoration, and, for those with sufficient wealth and free time, a place for leisure activities. A garden also demonstrated the status and education of its owner and reinforced his or her position in society and became ‘a pleasure for the intellect as well as for the senses’.² By 1881 Henry Bright had noted:

Never, perhaps, was the art of gardening so popular... as at present. The stately homes of England, the villas that line the roads of suburban districts, the cottages clustering round a village green, often even a back yard window-sill in the heart of some manufacturing town, all testify in their different ways to the desire of having an adornment of flowers.³

In the new, wealthy and rapidly expanding Victorian consumer society, many gardens were created, the construction and maintenance of which provided work for thousands of men and women from the head gardener at the top of his profession to the lowly boys, girls and women employed to weed, water, pick stones or collect caterpillars from cabbages and gooseberries. A commercial industry also burgeoned with nurserymen and market gardeners dedicated to the provision of rare and exotic species, to mass production of thousands of bedding plants, and to the supply of a wide variety of fruit and vegetables to feed a growing urban population.

Official census figures show that the number of gardeners in Devon had increased by 147 per cent in the period from 1851 to 1891 (see Chapter Three).⁴ One factor which led to this growth was the number of newly built villas in urban areas of the county and particularly in tourist towns such as Dawlish, Teignmouth, Sidmouth and Torquay. These provided holiday homes for the wealthy, a retreat for retirees and somewhere for the sick to benefit from the restorative properties of the sea. Improved roads and, from the late 1840s onwards, a widespread rail network, encouraged the growth of the nursery trade in Exeter and Plymouth and the expansion of the market gardening industry.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there was a rise in professionalism of the increased numbers of gardeners within the county; to identify individuals and discover how much, if at all, their working practices differed within the industry. In order to find out how working conditions and practices changed throughout the century, questions were asked as to whether or not a gardener was paid for overtime, when did he gain the right to paid holidays, and was it better financially and for stability to work in a larger garden or a smaller establishment? How critical was it for a gardener to be educated? Was education rewarded in pay or status and, in a predominantly rural county, was gardening a way, as Loudon suggests, to elevate status above that of an agricultural worker?⁵ Did gardeners have any time for hobbies and leisure time activities? If they did were they connected with work, for example growing show plants, or something entirely different? How much security did a gardener have and what happened to him when he became ill or when he retired? What advantages and perquisites, if any, kept a gardener gardening?

Within this thesis gardeners are defined as those who gardened for a livelihood whether employed or employers. Included are garden labourers, apprentices, journeymen and head gardeners who worked in private gardens. There were also many men who worked in public parks, hotel gardens, market gardens and nurseries. The study included self-employed jobbing gardeners and those who gardened as a secondary occupation. Garden owners who gardened for a hobby are excluded. This is another subject and one that has been discussed by Anne Wilkinson in *The Victorian Gardener*.⁶ The scope of this study encompasses the commercial sector as well as private gardens and contributes to the growing interest in the lives of the working class as well as that of the lower middle class.

Historiography

Without the expertise of career gardeners and garden labourers it would not have been possible to create and maintain the gardens of the nineteenth century, nor to import, hybridize and propagate so many of the exotic plants and flowers which we now take for granted. Yet it is rare to read about the contribution of this largely unknown group of men and women. Traditionally, most garden history has been written from an aesthetic perspective about atypical but well-known gardens, garden owners or designers.⁷ These studies of the rich, the famous and the influential, include people who made significant

contributions to garden fashion throughout the nineteenth century such as Humphry Repton, landscape gardener, John Claudius Loudon, garden designer and prolific writer, Joseph Paxton, head gardener at Chatsworth, and, at the end of the century, Gertrude Jekyll and William Robinson who were both part of the 'arts and craft' movement.⁸ However, as Martin Hoyles states 'there is a marked division of labour between those who did the mental work of design and those who carried out the manual work of construction'.⁹ Practical gardeners, even those who used their knowledge and experience to manage teams of workers to maintain a garden on a daily basis, are frequently ignored. To date there have been no county studies of the gardening industry, nor a comparative work on gardeners across a region or within the profession. There is also very little written about the lives of working gardeners in the nineteenth century, especially those who worked in the commercial sector. These were, as Jim Sharpe wrote, 'men and women whose existence is so often ignored, taken for granted or mentioned in passing in mainstream history'.¹⁰

In recent times the focus of garden history has begun to widen. Social historians Charles Quest-Ritson and Jane Brown consider the motivation which drove people to create, maintain or change their gardens, from the impact of scientific studies to flaunting their wealth by encouraging garden visitors.¹¹ Economics and fashion dictated design decisions, but Joan Morgan and Alison Richards have shown that the influence of head gardeners was far-reaching. Those who worked in some of the more important gardens became innovators, adapting new materials and technology to become authorities on, and fashion leaders for garden design; their influence was so great that they even dictated what food was grown and eaten.¹²

Harold Perkin maintains that professional men were defined by their expertise, theoretical knowledge and intellectual training which included the 'testing of competence'.¹³ These requirements were essential as technology improved and new imports of plants flooded the market. Writing in 1826 John Loudon had assumed a career gardener would have had a basic education and that his gardening skills would be taught as part of his apprenticeship, but he also believed in improving the professionalism of gardeners through self-education, echoing some of Humphry Repton's ideas that gardeners needed knowledge of many subjects and social skills in addition to their horticultural expertise.¹⁴ He encouraged young gardeners to study in their own time and wrote:

...it is not our intention to invite or court the young gardener to cultivate his intellectual faculties, but rather to point out to him the absolute necessity of doing so, if he wishes to maintain any higher station than that of a country labourer.¹⁵

However, gardeners, even head gardeners, in many cases worked in isolation which meant they did not form or become part of a professional body which restricted entry to the qualified. In other professions such as architects, doctors and lawyers, these organisations were designed to consolidate the reputation of their members and guarantee 'an appropriate remuneration for their work.'¹⁶ Without this protection, gardeners were frequently poorly paid. Loudon, one of the most influential garden-writers of the nineteenth century, sought to address this issue. He believed strongly that gardening should and did break down social barriers and that there was a place for some form of garden in almost everyone's life. His work, which included *The Encyclopaedia of Gardening* and *The Suburban Gardener*, ran to many thousands of words, and aimed to teach professional gardeners, garden owners and middle class amateurs all aspects of gardening. All his life Loudon campaigned for better housing, pay and working conditions for young gardeners declaring, 'how masters can expect any good service from men treated worse than horses, it is difficult to imagine'.¹⁷

In his capacity as editor of the *Gardener's Magazine*, Loudon passed on facts and practical advice, and informed his readers of recent innovations and new plant introductions. Most importantly, he gave working gardeners an opportunity to communicate with each other, and the world in general, by contributing to the journal by letter or through submission of articles. Most contributors were head gardeners from well-known gardens. These included Devon gardeners Robert Glendinning and James Barnes of Bicton, John Nash from Arlington Court and Herman Saunders from Kitley.¹⁸ Few under-gardeners used the medium of journals to communicate or leave records unless they were making a complaint, and those that did wrote anonymously using initials or pseudonyms, such as 'R.S.' and 'M.T.' in *The Gardener* or 'A young Gardener' and 'A Practical Gardener' in the *Gardener's Magazine*.¹⁹

The role of the gardening press of the nineteenth century should not be under-estimated. Self publicists and articulate gardeners with time to write, ensured that some head-gardeners became household names and has made it possible to identify some of the better known men and their preoccupations and specialities. For this reason head

gardeners have been written about more than any other branch of the gardening profession. Toby Musgrave describes head gardeners as the ‘forgotten heroes’ of gardening. He has traced back the traditions of gardening, but missed the opportunity to look at lesser known head gardeners. Instead he devotes one chapter to the atypical career of Joseph Paxton and another to James Barnes, who for almost thirty years was head gardener at Bicton, one of the most prestigious gardens in Devon and the United Kingdom during the nineteenth century.²⁰ Barnes became well-known to contemporaries through his letters in the gardening press, his appearances at horticultural shows throughout the country, and by winning a notorious libel court case against his previous employer Lady Rolle. This, arguably, changed for all time the dynamics between head gardeners and their masters.²¹

During the early part of the nineteenth century, the lower maintenance landscape parks constructed during the eighteenth century had given gardeners an opportunity to concentrate their skills on obtaining knowledge of imported trees and flowering shrubs which were flooding into the country, and time to breed new varieties of fruit and vegetables.²² Brent Elliott argues, however, that it was the reintroduction of flowers to gardens that led to the rise in status of the head gardener. Previously, a gardener’s only chance for fame, he maintains, would have been in the kitchen garden cultivating new varieties of fruit. He discusses the many contemporary theories of garden design, based on the writings of some Victorian head gardeners such as brothers Robert and David Fish, Robert Glendinning and Shirley Hibberd.²³ He suggests that it was when bedding out became fashionable as a method of displaying brightly coloured plants such as verbenas, geraniums and calceolarias, that the gardeners came into their own, being able to design their own colour schemes, plant combinations and bedding shapes.²⁴ Elliott mentions just three head gardeners who worked in Devon, Glendinning, Barnes and Alexander Forsyth, the latter who came to Devon to supervise construction of the new garden designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel at Watcombe.

Kate Colquhoun writes exclusively about Joseph Paxton, a rare example of a man who worked his way up from gardener’s boy to become not only head gardener at Chatsworth, but a great designer, editor of several publications and eventually, gentleman.²⁵ His life illustrated the enthusiasm, determination, hard work and to some extent luck, that of being in the right place at the right time, which was shared by the men who were most successful in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Other garden historians such as David Stuart, who paints a depressing portrait of the life of the working gardener, and Susan Campbell, devote just one chapter each to the men who spent their lives caring for other people's gardens.²⁶

Two studies go a small way to addressing the need for work on women gardeners. Anne Meredith has investigated the horticultural education, available from the final decade of the nineteenth century, to those mostly middle-class young women who hoped to gain employment as professional gardeners.²⁷ Although entitled *Virgins, Weeders and Queens: A History of Women in the Garden*, Twigs Way's book contains little about the 'Weeders' of the title, it is mostly about women garden owners, designers, artists or needlewomen. She too touches upon the education of women gardeners and stresses the effect of the two world wars and the consequent shortages of men as turning points in the acceptance of women in gardens.²⁸

John Harvey pioneered the study of nurseries and nurserymen. His research on those who set up business in the eighteenth century includes references to some Exeter nurseries, in particular those of Lucombe, established 1720, and the Ford family, but he concentrates on London nurserymen.²⁹ E. J. Willson, among others, has chronicled the history of London nurseries up to the twentieth century, and includes details of their plant introductions. A more recent volume has been written about the Treseder family of Truro.³⁰ Veitch's of Exeter and London were among the most famous nurserymen of the nineteenth century, sending out plant-hunters to bring back exotics from across the world to fuel an ever-growing demand in Britain. Shirley Heriz-Smith charts their rise to fame and Sue Shephard also describes the importance of the Veitch nurseries in Exeter and Chelsea.³¹ Whereas the large horticultural businesses, which produced plants on an industrial scale, are still remembered today, throughout history smaller businesses and their contribution to the horticultural world have been forgotten; few know of Dymond, the Sclaters or the Addiscotts in Exeter, or of the influence of the Rendle and Pontey families in Plymouth. Fewer still will know about Cuerel in Plymouth, Bale in Landkey or Hannaford in Teignmouth. Despite nurserymen being well-known to their contemporaries, and the commercial nature of their lives leading to the generation of more records than for most gardeners, material is still sparse when it comes to knowledge of the workers in the nurseries.

Much of the material on the history of market gardening was produced in the 1950s at a time when the government was encouraging smaller growers following the Second World War.³² Until then the two most important texts were a report in the Royal Horticultural Society's *Journal* in 1898 by Mr Assbee and that of Louisa Jebb who studied small-holdings for the Co-operative Association.³³ Ronald Webber charts the history of the industry in the 1970s but provides little new information, basing a large part of his work on earlier reports.³⁴ According to Webber, apart from the Tamar valley, there was 'not a great deal of horticulture' in Devon until the 1890s and the beginnings of the violet industry around Torquay, Teignmouth and Dawlish. However, Charles Vancouver in 1808, mentioned that in the 'kitchen gardens... [of Devon] in the neighbourhood of all the large towns, gardening is well understood, and carried on to the extent required; and to a perfection little short of what is practiced in the vicinity of London'.³⁵ There are more recent studies of the market gardening industry in Bedfordshire and Worcestershire by F. Beavington and J. M. Martin respectively, and a history of the Lobjoit family, a large producer for the Covent Garden Market.³⁶ Little is written about Devon apart from brief mentions in other studies.³⁷ Most work on the market garden industry in the South West region is centred in the Tamar Valley, situated between Devon and Cornwall, despite a thriving industry throughout Devon, for example, at Combe Martin in the north of the county, Torbay in South Devon, on the cliffs at Branscombe, in localities around Exeter including Topsham and Heavitree, and in the surrounds of Plymouth.³⁸

Local texts referred to include *Devon Gardens: An Historical Survey* edited by Steven Pugsley which comprises ten chapters on different aspects of Devon gardens, and *The Magic Tree* which details the history and background of many plants connected with the county. *Lie of the Land* contains what was up-to-the minute archaeological research into garden history in the South-West Region when it was published in 2003. *Devon Country Houses and Gardens Engraved* illustrates country houses using contemporary engravings, many with garden details; however, volume two has still to be published.³⁹ These works are principally about gardens and rarely include gardeners apart from perhaps a brief mention of a head gardener, although Pugsley's volume does include a chapter on nurserymen.⁴⁰

Many head gardeners produced their own books of practical advice including George Glenny who also edited the *Gardener's Gazette*, David Thomson editor of *The*

Gardener and H. W. Ward head gardener to the Earl of Radnor.⁴¹ One practical volume, aimed at all growers of vegetables including amateurs and market gardeners, was translated and published in 1885. Written by a Frenchman from Paris, individual varieties of vegetables are illustrated, their characteristics and keeping qualities discussed and cultivation instructions given.⁴²

Contemporary garden writers were often scathing about working gardeners. William Cobbett felt that, 'although many gardeners seldom want for confidence in their own abilities ...many only pretended to knowledge'. He also thought that it was a rare thing to find garden owners to be 'master of their gardeners'.⁴³ Gertrude Jekyll labelled private gardeners 'ignorant' and 'narrow-minded'.⁴⁴ She contrasted the life of the garden owner, as someone continually striving to educate himself throughout life, with 'the middle class of gardener, the man of narrow mental training' who resented his master's instructions and became obstructive or 'sullenly acquiescent'.⁴⁵ Although Jekyll claimed to have only known five honest gardeners '*open to new ideas*' she does redress the balance somewhat by admitting that some owners could have over-high expectations of their gardener's abilities.⁴⁶ This would certainly be true of people expecting the skills of a top head gardener for the pay of a garden labourer. On the other hand, the conflict between a self-educated master and a well-read, experienced and professional garden manager must have been one of the problems of employment where there was little difference in social class between the two.

It was crucial that the best staff were chosen to work in showcase gardens as they were visited by large numbers of influential and often critical people. A good head gardener needed to be conversant with all the latest fashions and advances in gardening techniques. He was required to be educated to a high standard with management skills to organise workers, which included skilled gardeners and numerous garden labourers, and to be able to converse with garden owners and their visitors. The status of the head gardener reflected the importance owners placed on their gardens. Victorian values of ambition and hard work saw men, like John Veitch of Killerton, Alexander Pontey of Plymouth and James Barnes of Bicton, become part of a rising professional class whose members gained economic and social status through their knowledge, experience and expertise.⁴⁷ Few achieved the meteoric rise from lowly gardener to friend and confidante of his master, Member of Parliament and entrepreneur as did Paxton; however, many like William Rendle, a third generation nurserymen from Plymouth,

rose to become a 'gentleman'. Rendle served as a Commissioner of Improvement, had a house at Hyde Park in London and stayed at the Clarendon Hotel in Brighton.⁴⁸ Other men acquired land and property, such as Richard Carter of Plymouth, William Vernon of South Molton and Herman Saunders, who became a 'landed proprietor' at Starcross on his retirement from Kitley.⁴⁹

Gardening in Devon

Devon is a large county with several distinct microclimates, from sheltered valleys which contain frost pockets to high rainfall areas in the west and north of the county.⁵⁰ These different conditions encouraged a variety of gardening opportunities and related skills. Despite winds and salt-laden air around the coast, and harsh conditions near Dartmoor, the predominantly gentle climate of the county made it ideal for trialling new plant species, many of which arrived in Plymouth or Exeter before being dispatched throughout the country. Not all plant material was purely decorative or food related, some had practical purposes and their utilisation helped the expanding British Empire. For example, in 1827, the Pontey nursery in Plymouth became one of the only nurseries in Britain to raise and experiment with the Pita plant, the fibres of which were prized for the manufacture of cordage which proved stronger than the traditional hemp rope used by the Navy.⁵¹

The mild climate also created an economic advantage over growers in other areas of the country with an extended season whereby plants could be put outside up to a month earlier than in other counties and would often stand in the open for a month later. As glasshouses were expensive to build, maintain and heat this was an important consideration which helped the growth of the nursery and market garden trade and enhanced the reputation of head gardeners such as Herman Saunders, who became known for fruit growing at Kitley.⁵²

The ports round Devon's coastline also encouraged the development of market gardening and of nurseries. Produce and plants could be imported and exported by sea as well as by road. Market gardeners sold vegetables, fruit and flowers to local towns and, later, via the railway, to large cities such as London, Bristol and Birmingham. By 1889 there were 1,112 acres of market gardens and 319 acres of nursery grounds in the county, as well as 26,485 acres of orchard, supplying food for the county and beyond.⁵³

Mariners had to be fed while at sea, creating a ready market, and gardeners were often requested to supply stores at short notice. Alexander Pontey in Plymouth took advantage of the port to import bones from Europe for his bone manure manufactory, as did W. Tremlett & Co. at Exeter.⁵⁴

Apart from a few showcase gardens which included Bystock Court, Castle Hill, Saltram, Luscombe, Endsleigh, Winslade and Bicton, which were in 'perfect high-keeping', there were not the great gardens that feature in other parts of the country such as Derbyshire and Yorkshire.⁵⁵ Instead, Devon had a multitude of smaller gardens. Loudon mentions twenty-two in his *Encyclopaedia*, but none qualified, in his estimation, as 'first-rate residences'.⁵⁶ However, despite the distance from major cities Devon families maintained good social links with the rest of the country. They spent time in London, Bristol and Bath for the appropriate seasons where it was possible to visit some of the better nurseries and fashionable country houses. Members of the gentry and aristocracy travelled abroad visiting historical gardens, and men from top county families such as Rolle, Courtenay, Drake, Fortescue and Acland became Members of Parliament, necessitating spending time in the capital. Many landowners like Lord Churston of Lupton House had a London house and estates elsewhere.⁵⁷ Therefore Devon kept up to date with, and in some cases anticipated, garden design trends. The Rolles at Bicton, for example, had one of the earliest curvilinear palm-houses in Britain, built c1826, with cast-iron glazing bars fitted with fish-scale panes of glass.⁵⁸ Early hothouses were built at Maristow, Powderham Castle, Nutwell Court and Rockbeare House, and one of the earliest hot water piped systems for heating 'pine stoves' was constructed in 1828 at Montrath House, near Cullompton, by the head gardener Robert Reid with the help of a local mason.⁵⁹

Although major designers had little direct input into Devon gardens, their influence was apparent in garden design. Those who did work in Devon included Humphry Repton who designed for great landowners such as the Hoare family at Dawlish and the Duke of Bedford at Endsleigh.⁶⁰ Francis Chantrey, not normally known as a garden designer, created a plan for a circular flower garden at Kitley.⁶¹ William Nesfield, William Robinson, and Gertrude Jekyll also advised on gardens in the county.⁶²

From the 1840s the railways brought tourists into the region which encouraged the creation of public parks and gardens as leisure facilities and places to showcase new

ideas and designs. The Veitch nursery, among others, advised on, designed, laid out and planted parks.⁶³ Charles Sclater, Lucombe and Pince, Veitch in Exeter and William Rendle in Plymouth also opened their nursery gardens to the public.⁶⁴ Head gardeners, such as John Rabjohns and William Anderson, were employed by Exeter town council (later the city council) to maintain public gardens and to oversee the production of bedding plants for elaborate displays.⁶⁵ Garden cemeteries were also laid out by local nurserymen, such as Hannaford at Teignmouth, to give the public more access to green walks. Ford Park Cemetery in Plymouth had a large staff, not only to maintain the designed landscape but also to grow flowers which were destined for wreaths.⁶⁶

Nineteenth century landowners took the opportunity to make money and influence their surroundings. Land was drained and reclaimed from the sea and villas built for holiday makers and the retired. Tourists who over-wintered or settled in the county also brought with them the latest ideas for villa gardens, increasing the demand for new plants and gardeners to tend new gardens. A middle class villa owner could combine a need for a coachman with the need for a gardener, frequently with a wife as a cook or housekeeper, as did Martha Hurrell at Pennycross.⁶⁷ Those sufficiently wealthy could employ a knowledgeable head gardener to superintend the garden and grow flowers, fruit and vegetables, some to be shown at local horticultural shows.⁶⁸ Head gardeners who had traditionally combined gardening with farming took on an additional role of caretaker, looking after the property when the owner was absent.

Primary Sources

For this study extensive use has been made of census returns, however, there were challenges with using this source. Although the 1841 census was the first in which occupations were listed, this was only for men aged twenty and over. Some gardeners identified through estate records were not included in enumerators' returns; men such as John Chaffey at Axminster and Thomas Otton at Sidmouth were listed instead as 'male servant'. Many working gardeners were recorded as labourers. This might have been because gardeners were subject to servant tax, or that they viewed themselves as day labourers who worked in the garden; casual workers were not recorded in the census. The whole of Devon has been researched rather than one or two parishes, as there is no typical Devon parish when it comes to gardens and gardeners, although some areas, such as St Thomas and Heavitree in Exeter, had a higher preponderance of gardeners

due to the number of nurserymen based there. Where parish boundaries have changed, the modern equivalent has been used.

Census records indicate that the number of working class women who were employed in gardens appeared to decline during the nineteenth century. Edward Higgs has shown that there is a large discrepancy between the numbers of women who worked in agriculture listed in the census and those listed in wages books. For example, in 1871, according to census figures, women made up just six per cent of the agricultural workforce, but when adjusted using other sources such as wages books the figure increased to twenty-seven per cent.⁶⁹ This study also found that many women were continuously employed in all types of garden, especially nurseries and market gardens. Although many were family members there were also women employed as weeders, harvesters, and labourers.⁷⁰ As late as the 1890s gangs of women and girls were still moving from one county to another engaged in fruit picking.⁷¹ Many women successfully took on a nursery or market gardening business when their husbands or fathers died, which argues that they were already working within the industry or had a good knowledge of business practices.

Details of commercial gardeners have been cross referenced with contemporary directories. These list occupations of people in business, the gentry and aristocracy, but there was no consistency between volumes as to how inhabitants were recorded. Market gardeners sometimes appear as 'farmers', sometimes as 'gardeners'. Some nurserymen were listed as market gardeners and vice versa. *Kelly's Directory* splits gardeners into two separate sections. The aristocracy of gardeners, 'nurserymen', 'seedsman' and 'florists' are in one group; 'gardeners' (sometimes, but not always, private gardeners), 'jobbing gardener', 'landscape gardeners' and 'market gardener' are in the other. Since men moved freely from one part of the industry to another, it has proved difficult to categorise them.

A few important gardeners, housed on an estate, were listed with the gentry. For example, William Bedford was listed as head gardener to the Countess of Egremont at Silverton in *White's Directory* in 1850; David Wilson at Castle Hill and John Franklin at Poltimore were among those listed in the 1878/79 edition.⁷² Later editions of *Kelly's Directory* had a section for private head gardeners, mostly those working for large villa or estate owners. As directories were compiled in advance of publication date, they are

not always accurate, for example, John Bartlett of Fremington appeared in the second edition of *White's* yet he had died in 1877, a couple of years before publication.

Names and details of gardeners who worked in Devon during the nineteenth century were entered onto one database which has grown to contain references for over 15,000 men, women and children (see Appendix I). Estate records, newspapers, directories, journals and other primary records were used to supplement the census records. The database has been used to determine family links between the different branches of the gardening profession and generational links between family members. For example, members of a family named Yole worked as private gardeners and nurserymen, and in a variety of gardens from Maristow to Endsleigh. The database shows that the Hull family at Tamerton Foliot leased the same land for a hundred years and after they left the land continued to be used as a nursery for a further fifty years.⁷³

Separate databases have been compiled to list wages at different gardens and to determine how long head gardeners remained in one position.

Analysis of the databases reveals that individual gardeners could work within all branches of the industry in their lifetime in order to gain experience or promotion. Leases and deeds record movement of tenants, length of tenure, rent payable and cost of land for commercial gardeners. They also demonstrate that short tenancy agreements led to frequent moves for many smaller commercial gardeners. Towns grew fast; not only did gardeners have to keep their own businesses together and expand where possible, but they also fought a losing battle with commercial interests and the demand for housing. Many market gardeners and nurserymen were forced to move from the centre to the edge of towns.

Devon has a good collection of estate archives and local records.⁷⁴ Details of documents, printed sources and illustrations for more than two hundred gardens in the county have been listed by Todd Gray in *The Garden History of Devon*, although since publication of this volume in 1995 some catalogue details have changed and new material has been deposited.⁷⁵ Large estates in the county such as Killerton, Castle Hill, Endsleigh, Maristow and Powderham Castle have good records kept by agents or stewards who were accountable to a powerful or absent landowner. Because the garden was an important, and often expensive, part of an estate, garden accounts were listed

separately from work carried out by artisans and labourers. No two sets of records are the same, not even from the same estate or even the same record keeper. At Saltram work in the plantations and parkland was separated from that in the pleasure grounds and kitchen garden.⁷⁶ As the annual or monthly breakdown found in agents' ledgers were kept for accounting purposes they exclude details such as the numbers of gardeners and individual wages or tasks. This frustrating lack of evidence of how the garden staff was organised and paid could be a reason why many books written about Victorian servants exclude gardeners.⁷⁷ Records used extensively for information on gardeners and their wages and working conditions include those of gardens at Horswell, Maristow, Powderham, Saltram, Kitley and Escot.

Most day-to-day bookwork was kept in the garden office. As a result, very few of these records survive. Few records have been found for Winslade and Bystock although these gardens were important enough to be commented on in contemporary journals.⁷⁸ In general, garden accounts kept by the head gardener list foremen, under-gardeners and labourers with details of their pay. Work done in the gardens by carpenters, glaziers, painters, masons and the smith was recorded in a separate section, often at the bottom of the page. Some daily ledgers resemble a school register of attendance. A few, for example those at Endsleigh, include details of the work undertaken by each individual.⁷⁹ This has helped to answer questions about the pay structure and how the work was shared out and overseen.

Evidence of the existence of less well known head gardeners can sometimes be more difficult to find than that for the labouring gardener. They were rarely listed with either the outdoor staff nor with the indoor servants. In households such as Powderham and Newnham, the head gardener was considered on a par with the upper servants, and paid a similar salary to the butler.⁸⁰ Journeymen gardeners, working their way up the career ladder, frequently do not appear with lists of labourers on an estate, a further indication that separate records were kept for the garden and are now lost.⁸¹ These men usually lived in a bothy or lodged on the estate, yet were still considered to be servants which gave them a little more security, status and importance than labourers. However, even when they were paid by the year rather than by the day, their income worked out to little more than that of the lowliest of the labourers.⁸²

Advertisements in contemporary newspapers frequently stated prices and quantities of trees and plants available and indicated what was grown and sold. Situations vacant and wanted columns, where gardeners advertised their services or garden owners looked for workers, showed requirements of different establishments. The *Exeter Flying Post* recorded disputes, criminal proceedings against and for nurserymen and gardeners and bankruptcy proceedings. Reports of horticultural exhibitions were detailed, many listed competition classes and prize-winners. Head gardeners acted as judges and teachers at cottage garden shows, and commented on, not just produce, but, following the ethos of the time, the neatness and tidiness of cottage and allotment gardens. These reports detailed produce being exhibited, they frequently named the judges and demonstrated the range of people involved in the shows. Some gardeners have been identified in birth, death and marriage columns and some relationships between gardening families confirmed. Notable events were also reported such as the opening of Plymouth Royal Botanic Garden by William Rendle, nurseryman, in 1850.⁸³

Finding insights into the experiences of Victorian gardeners is difficult. It was rare that a working gardener left details of his life, although some diaries do exist. Joseph Turrill of Garsington near Oxford, recorded his work in the 1860s as a market gardener with several small plots of land.⁸⁴ Thirty years earlier Mr Nicholls, a nurseryman from Redruth, kept a daily journal in which he recorded the weather and interesting events in his locality. He noted the beginning and ending of the market season, and the whereabouts of his men, mostly family members, who delivered and planted trees on Cornish estates. Presumably this information was used to aid him when it came to collecting payment from garden owners and in recompensing his staff. An interesting aspect of this diary is the link revealed between nurserymen throughout the country: Nicholls dealt with other nurserymen in Cornwall and Devon, but also travelled regularly to London to do business, as well as entertaining travelling representatives from other nurseries.⁸⁵ He was instrumental in gaining employment for some gardeners and kept good relationships with head gardeners, inviting them, and sometimes their wives, to a meal and a bed for the night when they visited his nursery.⁸⁶

A contrasting diary of Robert Aughtie describes life as an under-gardener from 1848 to 1850 on the Chatsworth estate.⁸⁷ This diarist recounts not just his working life, but also his social activities. Surprisingly, he had a reasonable amount of freedom, being allowed time off, not only to visit his sister when she was ill, but also to tour local

gardens. The latter might have been work-related, an opportunity to compare working practices as well as ‘the stimulus ... to equal or excel others’.⁸⁸ However, Aughtie also took a fortnight’s leave to experience ‘the grandest outing I have ever had’. ‘Having a desire to see the N. W. of England’, he travelled approximately nine hundred miles, by road, sea and foot, to explore factories and gardens which included a trip from Liverpool to Ireland.⁸⁹ Although it was not uncommon for head gardeners to be allowed time off to visit other gardens it was unusual for an under-gardener to have a holiday such as this, albeit a working one, and therefore this account is unlikely to be representative of other gardeners working on estates at this time.

A more informative diary is that of William Cresswell who worked as a single-handed gardener for a villa owner when his notes commenced, but who also, for a short time, worked at Audley End, Essex. He not only noted the weather daily but also described some of his tasks, making it possible to contrast his work in the two private establishments with his duties at Carter’s Nursery where he spent time before moving to Audley End.⁹⁰ Frequently diaries do not mention everyday tasks as they were too mundane and commonplace to the author to be noted, but in this case Cresswell kept records of when and how plants were propagated and harvested, building up a useful reference for his future. The emphasis on recording wind direction, temperature and rainfall patterns also indicates how important the weather was for future planning.

One of the last people to experience life in a garden bothy was Arthur Hooper. A head gardener’s son, he was apprenticed as a gardener from the age of fourteen. Arthur related his experiences on a variety of estates during the first quarter of the twentieth century. He described the highs (comradeship) and lows (poor living conditions) of life in garden bothies and detailed life as a gardener between the two world wars.⁹¹ It appears that garden practices had changed little since the previous century.

A contemporary of Hooper was Ted Humphris who became a gardener’s boy at Aynho Park House on the Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire borders in 1915 aged just thirteen. He was eventually promoted to head gardener and remained in the same garden until he retired in 1969.⁹² This autobiography enforces the notion that it is unsafe to generalise about a typical gardener. Humphris was a rarity in that he did not move from garden to garden to achieve his promotion as did many other head gardeners. Two further points arise from his history. The first is that until the Second World War garden labour was

plentiful and cheap, the second, that time spent to produce perfect flowers or vegetables was immaterial, it was the quality of the end product that was important. This was in stark contrast with life as a market gardener where a limited number of vegetables and flowers were grown on an industrial scale and where a crop failure could lead to economic failure. Speed was therefore an essential part of production as described by James Barnes where:

...you will see a large space of ground cropped and arrived at the greatest state of perfection one day, and in about three days afterwards you will see it all gone; the ground manured, trenched and cropped, almost in the space of time a West-Country man would turn around to reply to a question.⁹³

Other resources have included maps, plans, letters, diaries, parish records such as settlement returns and apprentice papers, nursery catalogues and quarter session reports. Regretfully, many Devon wills were destroyed during the Second World War, although a few have survived as copies or tucked into estate or solicitors' records. These tell us a little about the fortunes of some of the wealthier gardeners and nurserymen. An 1803 listing of the Exeter Militia notes several gardeners among the men eligible to serve, most notably John, James and William Sclater whose family went on to become well-known nurserymen.⁹⁴ The 1832 and 1864 voters' lists identify gardeners eligible to vote, and among the list of account holders of the West of England and South Wales District Bank are a few nurserymen and gardeners who would have needed a bank account for their business or because they were handling large amounts of money in the absence of owners.⁹⁵

Structure of thesis

This thesis falls naturally into two sections, Part One looks at private gardeners and Part Two considers the commercial gardeners. The former gardened for a master or mistress, the latter were led by self employed men, who had business skills in addition to their gardening knowledge and experience. Many had trained in private gardens. The first chapter sets the scene and considers the effect that social and horticultural change in the nineteenth century had on the gardener with the introduction of exotic plants and changing designs which directed how gardens were laid out. The number of gardeners increased as gardening became more labour intensive and, due to urban growth, more people had access to a garden.

‘England is the nursing home of self-made men ...they bring themselves to the front by their natural forces’ proclaimed the *Exeter Flying Post*.⁹⁶ These ‘natural forces’ ensured that gardeners had a higher mobility than other servants and labourers.⁹⁷ They needed to move frequently to gain experience in different garden departments and also to increase their income. A gardener who remained in one position for any length of time was unlikely to receive a pay rise. Benjamin Dawson at Maristow earned £1 a week from when he was first employed as head gardener in 1843 until at least 1854 when the records cease.⁹⁸ There were life-style reasons for remaining in one place, not least of which was loyalty to a particular garden or owner.

Chapter two contrasts the working life of a professional gardener who worked in private gardens with that of garden labourers. It demonstrates how many times a successful professional gardener moved from one position to another and how physical movement frequently affected social movement and social status. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of a structured process of education and training through which a gardener had to progress in order to become accepted as a ‘master’ gardener, although the strict hierarchy of a large estate did not always support individuals. Self-education became an important factor for future employment of professional gardeners. This chapter suggests that many gardeners never achieved their career ambitions and outlines what became of the aged gardener, whether successful or otherwise.

Chapter three describes the lives of the lowliest of gardeners, the garden labourers, jobbing gardeners and women workers. Many jobbing gardeners combined their work with another profession such as an innkeeper, butcher or lodging-house keeper. Domestic gardeners in smaller households combined roles of groom, coachman or general help; their wives were often employed as laundresses, cooks, housekeepers or lodge-keepers, and many took the surplus produce of the gardens to market to sell. This chapter also considers the practicalities of gardening, the tools and equipment used, working conditions and practices, and looks at wages of gardeners.

Chapter four considers the men who were at the pinnacle of their profession. It looks at the autonomy of the head gardener or superintendent and considers the managerial skills needed to lead the staff in a large garden where it was often necessary to send surplus produce to local markets, hire and dismiss staff, order stock, oversee production of plant material and experiment with new imported and hybridized stock. These responsibilities

will be contrasted with the lives of head gardeners of smaller establishments. The influence of head gardeners on the future of gardening as a profession is considered. This chapter also discusses competition and communication of gardeners through attendance at horticultural society shows, and their correspondence in gardening journals and pamphlets.

The second part of the thesis considers the role of commercial gardeners, the nurserymen and market gardeners who competed to supply both the region and the country with vegetables, fruit, flowers and gardening equipment.

Chapter five charts the rise in the numbers of market gardeners who produced food for growing nineteenth century towns. The railways led to growers being able to specialise according to climate and soil conditions. This increased the number of gardeners who not only supplied local markets, but also sent fruit and flowers by train to Covent Garden market in London. Spread throughout the county, but mainly based within easy reach of the larger towns, ports or railway stations, many market gardens were small family run businesses. Good financial returns enabled market gardeners to compete successfully with nurserymen.

The wealthiest gardeners, looked at in Chapter six, were the nurserymen. Some had links which went back to the early eighteenth century. To be a success, it was necessary to specialise or to keep up with the latest imports. Lucombe and Pince were the first of the Exeter nurseries and one of the most long-lived; the Veitch family also began their business in the eighteenth century, and became known for design of gardens, importing plant material from across the world and for their hybridization of plants. There were many smaller nurseries who supplied the market with everything from forest trees to ferns for new conservatories. Proprietors of nurseries dealt with head gardeners of large estates and sometimes with the gentry themselves. They produced plants on an industrial scale to be used by other gardeners in private gardens or in market gardens. As businessmen they mixed socially with other professional classes; in contrast their workers worked long hours for little pay.

This thesis concludes that the numbers of professional gardeners increased dramatically throughout the nineteenth century in response to a largely middle-class demand for gardens, the availability of new plant material and a wider variety of foodstuffs. To gain

experience, professional gardeners often worked in all branches of the profession at some stage in their lives. Although the increased professionalism led to a rise in status of all gardeners throughout the century, this was not matched by increased wages and improved working conditions, especially for the average gardener. A small percentage achieved their goal of becoming a head gardener or proprietor of a commercial establishment, but, despite their long and varied training, many working gardeners remained little more than journeymen or garden labourers.

¹ J.C. Loudon, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* (London and Edinburgh, 1838), 534.

² Henry A. Bright, *The English Flower Garden* (London, 1881), vi.

³ Bright, *English*, 1.

⁴ These figures include domestic gardeners working in private gardens, market and jobbing gardeners, and nurserymen. Source: *Census (1851): population tables, pt II: ages, civil condition, occupations and birth-places of the people* (PP 1854, lxxxviii vol 1); *Census (1891) Vol III, ages, condition as to marriage, occupations, birthplaces and infirmities* (PP 1893-4, cvi).

⁵ J. C. Loudon, 'Self Education of Gardeners', *GM* 1 (1826), 225-226, 225.

⁶ Anne Wilkinson, *The Victorian Gardener: The Growth of Gardening & the Floral World* (Stroud, 2006).

⁷ See, for example, Miles Hadfield, *Gardening in Britain* (London, 1960); Graham Stuart Thomas, *Gardens of the National Trust* (London, 1979); Laurence Fleming & Alan Gore, *The English Garden* (London, 1990); Christopher Thacker, *The Genius of Gardening: The History of Gardens in Britain and Ireland* (London, 1994); Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall, *The Garden: An English Love Affair, One Thousand Years of Gardening* (London, 2002).

⁸ Stephen Daniels, *Humphry Repton: Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England* (New Haven & London, 1999); Melanie Louise Simo, *Loudon and the Landscape: From Country Seat to Metropolis* (New Haven & London, 1988); Kate Colquhoun, *A Thing in Disguise: The Visionary Life of Joseph Paxton* (London, 2003); Judith B. Tankard & Michael R. Van Valkenburgh, *Gertrude Jekyll: A Vision of Garden and Wood* (London, 1990); Mea Allan, *William Robinson 1838-1935: Father of the English Flower Garden* (London, 1982).

⁹ Martin Hoyles, *The Story of Gardening* (London, 1991), 24.

¹⁰ Jim Sharpe, 'History from Below', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. by Peter Burke (Pennsylvania, 1991), 23-41, 25.

¹¹ Charles Quest-Ritson, *The English Garden: A Social History* (London, 2001); Jane Brown, *The Pursuit of Paradise: A Social History of Gardens and Gardening* (London, 1999).

¹² Joan Morgan and Alison Richards, *A Paradise out of a Common Field: The Pleasures and Plenty of the Victorian Garden* (New York, 1990).

¹³ Harold Perkin, *Professionalism, property and English Society since 1880; The Stenton Lecture 1980* (Reading, 1981), 7.

¹⁴ H. Repton, *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening* [1806] repr. (Farnborough, 1969), 44.

¹⁵ J. C. Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London, 1822), 1327-1330; Loudon, 'Self Education', 225, 356.

¹⁶ Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early industrial Britain 1783-1870* 2nd edn (London, 1996), 178, 292.

¹⁷ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 378.

¹⁸ Henry Dalgleish (Knightshayes, Tiverton), John Gullett (Woodbine Cottage, Torquay), Richard Saunders (Luscombe Castle, Dawlish), Amaziah Saul (Castle Hill, South Molton) and James Griffin (Cowley House, Exeter), were also contributors from Devon.

¹⁹ *Gardener's Magazine (GM)* 5 (1829); *The Gardener* (1870).

²⁰ Toby Musgrave, *The Head Gardeners: Forgotten Heroes of Horticulture* (London, 2007), chapters 7 and 8.

- ²¹ See *GM* 18 (1842), 555-567, 617-621; *GM* 19 (1843), 2-3, 46-52, 111-113, 138-9, 164-6, 234-8 301-6, 367-8, 419-26, 495-7, 539-40, 601-5, 606-7, 653-7; *The Times*, 13.12.1869, 11d; *Gardener's Chronicle* (GC) 21.11.1874, 655-6.
- ²² Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (PWDRO) 74/623; *GM* 1 (1826), 265; These were also the themes of late eighteenth-century books written by working gardeners such as John Abercrombie, Samuel Cooke, John Dicks and Thomas Ellis.
- ²³ Brent Elliott, *Victorian Gardens* (London, 1986); Robert Glendinning (1805-62) worked at Bicton until 1839 and also worked at the Exeter Nursery with Lucombe and Pince before taking over Richard Williams' nursery in Chiswick.
- ²⁴ Elliott, *Victorian*, 13.
- ²⁵ Colquhoun, *Paxton* (London, 2003); Paxton edited the *Magazine of Botany and Register of Flowering Plants* (1834-49), *The Horticultural Register and General Magazine* (1831-6) as well as being involved with the *Gardener's Chronicle* and writing a *Botanical Dictionary* (London, 1840) and a *Practical Treatise on the Culture of the Dahlia* (London, 1838).
- ²⁶ Susan Campbell, *Charleston Kidding: A History of Kitchen Gardening* (London 1996); David Stuart, *The Garden Triumphant: A Victorian Legacy* (London, 1988).
- ²⁷ Anne M. Meredith, 'Middle-Class Women and Horticultural Education, 1890-1939' PhD. Thesis, University of Sussex, 2001; Anne Meredith, 'Horticultural Education in England, 1900-40: Middle-Class Women and Private Gardening Schools' *Garden History* 31:1 (2003), 67-79.
- ²⁸ Twigs Way, *Virgins, Weeders and Queens: A History of Women in the Garden* (Stroud, 2006), 213-21.
- ²⁹ John Harvey, *Early Nurserymen: with reprints of Documents and Lists* (London, 1974); 'Early Nurseries at Exeter', *Garden History Society Newsletter* 24 (1988).
- ³⁰ For example, E. J. Willson, *West London Nursery Gardens: the nursery gardens of Chelsea, Fulham, Hammersmith and a part of Westminster, founded before 1900* (London, 1982); *Nurserymen to the World: The Nursery Gardens of Woking and North-West Surrey and plants introduced by them* (London, 1989); David Solman, *Loddiges of Hackney: The largest hothouse in the world* (London, 1995); Suzanne Treseder, *A Passion for Plants: The Treseders of Truro* (Penzance, 2004).
- ³¹ Shirley Heriz-Smith, 'The Veitch Nurseries of Killerton and Exeter, Part 1, c1780 to 1863', *Garden History* 16:1 (1988), 41-57; 'James Veitch & Sons of Exeter and Chelsea, Part 2, 1853-1870', *Garden History* 16:2 (1988), 135-153; Sue Shephard, *Seeds of Fortune: A Gardening Dynasty* (London, 2003).
- ³² D. J. Goodchild, *Horticulture in the Tamar Valley*, Horticultural Education Association Annual Report (1954); Katherine H. Johnstone, 'Horticulture in the Tamar Valley', *Agriculture* 62 (1955), 123-9; Grace L. Zambra, *Violets for Garden & Market*, rev. edn (London, 1950).
- ³³ Mr J. Assbee, 'The Progress of Market Garden Cultivation During Queen Victoria's Reign', *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society (JRHS)* 21:3 (1898), 393-412; L. Jebb, *The Small Holdings of England: A Survey of Various Existing Systems* (London, 1907).
- ³⁴ Ronald Webber, *Market Gardening: The History of Commercial Flower, Fruit and Vegetable Growing* (Newton Abbot, 1972).
- ³⁵ C. Vancouver, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Devon* [1808], repr. (Newton Abbot, 1969), 235.
- ³⁶ F. Beavington, 'The Development of Market Gardening in Bedfordshire 1799-1939', *Agricultural History Review (AgHR)* 23.1 (1975), 23-47; J. M. Martin, 'The Social and Economic Origins of the Vale of Evesham Market Gardening Industry', *AgHR* 33.1 (1985), 41-50; Jessie Lobjoit Collins, *Key of the Fields* (London, 1990).
- ³⁷ Vancouver, *Devon*, 235; Joan Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture: A History From the Black Death to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1997); Christabel S. Orwin and Edith H. Whetham, *History of British Agriculture 1846-1914* (London, 1964).
- ³⁸ See Jebb, *Small Holdings*; Goodchild, 'Horticulture'; Johnstone, 'Tamar Valley' (1955); Kelly's *Directory of Devonshire* (London, 1897), 88.
- ³⁹ Steven Pugsley, (ed.), *Devon Gardens: An Historical Survey* (Stroud, 1994); NCCPG, *The Magic Tree: Devon Garden Plants History and Conservation* (Devon, 1989); Robert Wilson-North (ed.), *The Lie of the Land: Aspects of the archaeology and history of the designed landscape in the South West Of England* (Exeter, 2003); Todd Gray, *Devon Country Houses and Gardens Engraved: Volume One, A-La-Ronde to Lifton Park* (Exeter, 2001).
- ⁴⁰ Audrey le Lièvre, 'To the Nobility and Gentry About to Plant': Nurseries and Nurserymen', in Pugsley, *Devon Gardens*, 91-105.
- ⁴¹ See, for example, George Glenny, *Glenny's Hand-Book of Practical Gardening* (London, 1850); David Thomson, *Handy Book of The Flower Garden 2nd edn* (Edinburgh and London, 1870); H. W. Ward, *My Gardener: A Practical Handbook for the Million* (London, 1891).
- ⁴² M. M. Vilmorin-Andrieux, *The Vegetable Garden: Illustrations Descriptions and Culture of Garden Vegetable* [1885] Facsimile edn (London, 1977). Preface by William Robinson, Translated from French by Mr W. Miller.

- ⁴³ William Cobbett, *The English Gardener* [1829] ed and with an introduction by Peter King (London, 1996), viii, 33, 125.
- ⁴⁴ Gertrude Jekyll, *Wood and Garden: Notes and Thoughts, Practical and Critical of a Working Amateur* [1899] (Suffolk, 1994), 360-369.
- ⁴⁵ Jekyll, *Wood*, 362-3.
- ⁴⁶ Jekyll, *Wood*, 367-8.
- ⁴⁷ Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (London & New York, 1989), 4.
- ⁴⁸ *Census Enumerators' returns (Census)* Public Record Office (PRO) HO107 Plymouth St Andrew 1851, PRO RG11 Brighton 1881; PWDRO 842/9.
- ⁴⁹ PWDRO 1408/63; North Devon Record Office (NDRO) 2309B/W272; *Census* PRO RG9 Kenton 1861.
- ⁵⁰ NCCPG *Magic Tree*, 14.
- ⁵¹ *GM*, 8, (1832), 240-242.
- ⁵² *GM*, 7 (1831), 225; *GM* 18, (1842), 542; *Torquay and Tor Directory and General Advertiser* 10.04.1846, 3b reported that 'Dahlias have been gathered at Torquay, upon the hills on Christmas-day'.
- ⁵³ *Agricultural Returns of Great Britain* (PP 1888 cvi).
- ⁵⁴ *Exeter Flying Post (EFP)* 25.12.1861, 1b.
- ⁵⁵ *GM*, 18, (1842), 532.
- ⁵⁶ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1247. Bickton, Boringdon, Castle Hill, Collipriest House, Endsleigh, Escot House, Farringdon House, Great Fulford, Haldon House, Lindridge, Luscombe House, Mamhead, Mount Edgcumbe [which used to be in Devon], Nutwell Court, Oxton House, Powderham Castle, The Retreat, Saltram, Tawstock, Ugbrooke, Wolford Lodge and Yeo Vale.
- ⁵⁷ Lord Churston had a house in Eaton Place London and estates in Staffordshire.
- ⁵⁸ Phil Clayton, 'Glass Distinction', *The Garden* 132:2 (2007), 92-95, 92.
- ⁵⁹ PWDRO 874/3/1 (1799); George Tod, *Plans, Elevations and Sections of Hot-Houses, Green-Houses, &c. recently built in different parts of England, for Various Noblemen and Gentlemen* (London, 1823), 14-22; *GM* 4 (1828), 304.
- ⁶⁰ Humphry Repton designed gardens at Endsleigh, Milton Abbot, for The Duke of Bedford, and at Luscombe Castle, Dawlish, for Charles Hoare.
- ⁶¹ PWDRO 540/14/6; *GM* 18 (1842), 542.
- ⁶² See for example W. A. Nesfield at Watcombe, William Goldring at Stoodleigh, Mawson at Wood and Jekyll at Lewtrenchard. William Robinson advised on gardens at Bickton and Killerton see Richard Bisgrove *William Robinson: The Wild Gardener* (London, 2008); Devon Record Office (DRO) 1148M/Box 18/4.
- ⁶³ *EFP* 18.01.1890, 3d, People's Park at Bournemouth, laid out by Veitch and son; *EFP* 4.06.1897, 2e; F. W. Meyer, landscape designer for Veitch, designed public gardens at Yeovil. *EFP* 24.07.1897, 6e, Veitch and Son advised Exeter City Council on management of Northernhay Gardens and other parks.
- ⁶⁴ *EFP* 07.08.1834, 2f; *EFP* 06.06.1850, 8e; *EFP* 01.08.1850, 5d; *EFP* 17.03.1880, 8c.
- ⁶⁵ *EFP* 18.05.1864, 8b, Rabjohns had been gardener at Northernhay Park for 19 years. *EFP* 9.07.1898, 2f.
- ⁶⁶ *EFP* 20.12.1855; Pers. communication Dr Henry Will.
- ⁶⁷ *Census* PRO RG11 Pennycross, 1881 [CD].
- ⁶⁸ *Devon Weekly Times (DWT)* 05.11.1895.
- ⁶⁹ Edward Higgs, 'Occupational Censuses and the Agricultural Workforce in Victorian England & Wales' in *Economic History Review (ECHR)*, XLVIII:4 (1995), 700-716, 711.
- ⁷⁰ *The Garden* 01.03.1890, 211; 08.03.1890, 237; 22.03.1890, 283.
- ⁷¹ *The Garden* 01.03.1890, 211; 08.03.1890, 237; 22.03.1890, 283.
- ⁷² William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon including The City of Exeter* 2nd edn (Sheffield & London, 1850); Morris & Co, *Directory and Gazetteer Devonshire* (1870). As Bickton was a prestigious garden, the head gardeners were always listed see *White's* 1870, 150 and *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire* (London, 1893), 57.
- ⁷³ PWDRO 874/3/44; DRO 3610Z and add/1; PWDRO 407/200, 282-3, 1656.
- ⁷⁴ These survive in record offices at Exeter, Plymouth and Barnstaple. Local studies collections also have good resources, especially access to contemporary newspapers such as the *Exeter Flying Post*, see West Country Studies Library, Devon and Exeter Institution and North Devon Athanaeum. Some private archives are also accessible, for example Clinton Devon Estate Archive holds records for Bickton and Stevenstone, Powderham Castle and Ugbrooke have their own archives.
- ⁷⁵ Todd Gray, *The Garden History of Devon* (Exeter, 1995).
- ⁷⁶ PWDRO 69/M/7/28 Garden Account Books; PWDRO 69/M/6/112-114 Estate Account Books. At the end of each year individual accounts were entered into one huge account book which gave a breakdown of all the different departments on the estate so that the owner could see at a glance which area cost or produced the most. Timber from the plantations would have been sold as part of the income of the estate, whereas the gardens were effectively part of the household expenses.

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- ⁷⁷ See, for example, Pamela Sambrook, *The Country House Servant* (Stroud, 1999) and *Keeping Their Place: Domestic Service in the Country House 1700-1920* (Stroud, 2005); John Burnett, (ed.), *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s* [1974] repr. (London, 1994); Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Stroud, 1990).
- ⁷⁸ GC 9.04.1881, 474; *The Gardening World* 12 18.01.1896, 321; GM 19 (1843), 242.
- ⁷⁹ DRO L1258M/V4/4.
- ⁸⁰ DRO 1508M/Devon/Estate/Account Books V4; PWDRO 273/306.
- ⁸¹ See, for example, Bickton records 96M/Box2/6 and Clinton Devon Estate Archives uncatalogued *Bickton Workmen's Time and Pay Sheet*.
- ⁸² DRO 1508M/Devon/Estate/Account Books/V18.
- ⁸³ EFP 20.06.1850, 8e; 01.08.1850, 5d.
- ⁸⁴ E. Dawson and S. R. Royal (eds.), *An Oxfordshire Market Gardener: The Diary of Joseph Turrill of Garsington 1863-67* (Stroud, 1993).
- ⁸⁵ Cornwall Record Office (CRO) DDX 119/1-2 Nicholls of Redruth diary.
- ⁸⁶ CRO DDX 119/1-2.
- ⁸⁷ Basil and Jessie Harley, *A Gardener at Chatsworth: Three Years in the Life of Robert Aughtie 1848-1850* (Worcestershire, 1992).
- ⁸⁸ R.T., 'The Necessity and Advantages of Gardeners visiting one another's Gardens' in GM 8, (1832), 645-647.
- ⁸⁹ Harley and Harley, *A Gardener*, 21st October 1850, 186-188.
- ⁹⁰ English Heritage, *Diary of a Victorian Gardener: William Cresswell and Audley End* (Swindon, 2006).
- ⁹¹ Arthur Hooper, *Life in the Gardeners' Bothy* (Suffolk, 2000).
- ⁹² Ted Humphris, *Garden Glory: From garden boy to head gardener at Aynhoe Park* 2nd edn (London 1988); Ted Humphris & Doris Palmer, *Apricot Village: Further reminiscences of the Aynhoe gardener* (Bath, 1987).
- ⁹³ James Barnes, 'ART. II. Bickton Gardens their Culture and Management, in a Series of Letters to the Conductor. Reasons for following the Business of a Market-Gardener', GM 19 (1843), 164-166, 165.
- ⁹⁴ W. G. Hoskins (ed.), *Exeter Militia List 1803* (London, 1972), 95, 96, 102.
- ⁹⁵ DWT (1871, 1872).
- ⁹⁶ EFP 14.06.1865, 6f. Obituary of Joseph Paxton.
- ⁹⁷ Jessica Gerard, *Country House Life: Family and Servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994), 162, 174.
- ⁹⁸ PWDRO 874/3/50-61.

PART ONE

PRIVATE GARDENERS

Gardening as Employment

CHAPTER ONE

The Eclectic Century: Change in the garden and how it affected the gardener

Introduction

Garden Ownership

Design

Glasshouses

Parks and Public Gardens

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CHAPTER ONE

The Eclectic Century: Change in the garden and how it affected the gardener

...no-one can deny that the vast facilities afforded us by modern inventions, - the vast improvements in particular races of flowers and plants, - the advantages of modern science, and other characteristics of the age, have enabled us to carry out many operations with much less trouble than our forefathers.¹

Introduction

Gardeners of the nineteenth century faced many changes and challenges. Ownership of a garden expanded as pleasure gardens, once the prerogative of the aristocracy, became a statement of conspicuous consumption of the middle classes. As travel became easier, especially with the advent of the railways, owners moved more freely around the country visiting one another. A garden, therefore, had to provide fresh fruit and vegetables to feed a family and their guests, flowers for the house and all-year-round interest. As designs changed from predominantly natural to an eclectic mix of styles there was an attempt to combine new fashions and plants into one space. The strongest emphasis throughout the nineteenth century was on the decorative and artistic, with flower gardens at the forefront of design. Italianate terraces and parterres vied with rockeries, grottoes, arboreta, herbaceous borders, shrubberies and flower beds, all designed to display the latest varieties of imported trees and plants.

Nurseries such as Veitch and Son in Exeter, 'in which alone will be found more new and valuable plants than in any place in Europe, with the single exception of the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew,' were among the first to send out plant hunters. These intrepid explorers brought back seeds and cuttings from as far away as America, Chile, Peru, India, and China.² Plant material was also dispatched to nurserymen in Devon from the Royal Horticultural Society in London to be trialled in the mild climate (see Chapter Six). The need to house tender exotics, which required heat and careful management to survive, together with the repeal of the glass tax in 1845 and the brick tax in 1850, encouraged the growth in the number of glasshouses. Every important garden had its conservatories and specialist hothouses, some to house exotic species, others used as 'manufactories'³ of thousands of scarlet geraniums, yellow calceolarias, blue lobelia and similar plants for bedding out. The use of colour in gardens was hotly debated between gardeners, and horticulture became the prerogative of many, 'whether regarded as a

healthful and rational amusement, or as a source of beneficial employment and subsistence'.⁴

This chapter considers some of the many changes throughout this innovative period and looks at the variety of garden designs, and new, 'scientific', techniques which increased the demands made on gardeners and affected their working lives. It illustrates how the need for botanical expertise and the demand for diversity in gardens increased the range of specialisation which required experienced, educated, and consequently, more professional, gardeners.

Garden Ownership

The employers of gardeners are as various as the branches of gardening... private individuals form the great body of the employers of all grades of gardeners ...⁵

Investment in trade, manufacture and industry, and the growth of service providers such as lawyers, bankers, doctors and the clergy had created a class of people with money to invest in luxury items. The Barnstaple Permanent Mutual Benefit Building Society enabled people like Henry Forester, 'Doctor of Medicine', to move from crowded, dirty town centres to the suburbs, where they purchased or built villas with substantial gardens in an attempt to emulate the gentry and aristocracy.⁶ In St David's parish the Duryard Estate was purchased by the Western Land Society and was, 'divided into Lots of from an acre to four or more acres in extent', for sale to prospective home owners and speculators. The aim was to fulfil a demand 'for villas with land attached, in the neighbourhood of Exeter'.⁷

The new purchasing power was evident in middle-class houses fuelled by advertisements in newspapers which had become more widely read following the abolition of newspaper tax in 1855. Masses of flowers were used for table decorations, in fireplaces, or on specially constructed plant stands. There were flower motifs on wallpaper, furniture and clothes. Larger houses had a small room with a sink where plants could be arranged daily and it was one of the head gardener's jobs to cut fresh flowers for the house, or to replace potted plants on a regular basis. The home became a centre of entertainment and leisure where good food was offered. Kitchen gardens had to be productive, the gardeners able to dispatch fresh fruit and vegetables to the cook or to any of the houses where the family might be staying.

John Claudius Loudon had recognised the growing demand of new garden owners: his *Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* (1838) included detailed instructions of what the fashionable should have in varied plots attached to different sized properties, from 'First' (aristocratic) to 'Fourth class' (artisan) dwellings. The book was written, 'in such a manner as to be understood by those who have little knowledge of either gardening or country affairs'.⁸ Paxton-trained gardener, Edward Kemp, later Landscape Gardener at Birkenhead Park, also wrote a book aimed at new garden owners, recognising that not all would have numerous acres in which to lay out their garden.⁹

Although many villa gardens were too small for the grand designs created for larger estates, this did not prevent some Victorians from attempting to incorporate as many features as possible into a confined area. Together with kitchen gardens, they contained Chinese bridges, Indian gardens, follies, rustic arches, pergolas, seats, shelters, summerhouses and aviaries. The rootery and stumpery provided a home for a collection of ferns, while arboreta, American gardens and pineta demonstrated their owner's botanical knowledge and ability to purchase new introductions. Grottoes and rockeries demonstrated scientific hobbies and gave ladies the opportunity to design displays of minerals and shells.

Industrial changes such as the manufacture of artificial stone by Austins and Coade ensured that statues and fountains could be used to embellish a garden.¹⁰ Pulhamite stone, a form of cement treated to look like real rock, was used in place of stone in rock gardens. The Victorians had a positive attitude to industry and materials used to create rockeries included industrial waste which was inexpensive to purchase and sometimes gave interesting effects. At Killerton, paper-printers' blocks were used as flower baskets. Made of oak they were sanded and painted to resemble 'sculptured stone'.¹¹

A garden which conformed to the latest fashion became a status symbol. Instant results were required; villa owners were not prepared to wait until a garden matured, hence bedding became popular as results could be obtained in one season. The purchase of garden furniture, plants and employment of staff to maintain gardens, demonstrated there was surplus money to spend on non-essentials. The result of the increase in the number of houses with large gardens meant that, by the end of the century, more people employed gardeners than ever before.

Design

Although gardens underwent a huge transformation during the Victorian era, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the emphasis was still on the landscape park. For example, at Saltram in 1803 and 1804 twice as much money was spent on the park as on the gardens. Labour alone cost more than six times that spent on the garden, however, from 1805 newly created pleasure gardens began to take prominence over the park.¹² The annual garden account rocketed from £54.5s in 1804 to £376.11s.11½d in 1814.¹³

By the end of the first decade of the new century there had been a backlash against:

the false and mistaken taste for placing a large house in a naked grass-field, without any apparent line of separation betwixt the ground exposed to cattle and the ground annexed to the house.¹⁴

Contemporary comment suggests that people had found landscape parks were too natural and lacking in colour and interest. Richard Payne Knight, for example, complained that they destroyed all 'picturesque composition'. He maintained:

The modern art of landscape gardening, as it is called, takes away all natural enrichment, and adds none of its own; unless, indeed, meager or formal clumps of trees and still more formal patches of shrubs, may be called enrichment.¹⁵

Partly as a result of this criticism, landscape parks began to include individual garden departments such as the pleasure garden for walks, the flower garden and a range of glasshouses. This encouraged the employment of more specialised staff. At Powderham Castle in 1807, a 'Botanic' gardener, Richard Mountjoy, was employed in addition to Thomas Smiles, who had charge of the kitchen garden, and Thomas Dowell the head gardener.¹⁶

Taste and fashion changed for practical as well as aesthetic reasons. A large estate was needed to develop parkland which required an initial input of a vast amount of labour to drain land, move earth from one area to another, or to plant acres of trees. Designs took a long time to mature and many landholders may never have lived to see original plans grown to perfection. Landscape parks became impractical for people who were forced to spend more time at home and less time travelling abroad due to the expenses and restrictions of the Napoleonic Wars – there was nowhere dry underfoot near the house where landowners and their visitors could take a stroll. Flowers, apart from flowering

shrubs in wilderness walks, had been moved to kitchen gardens or to walled gardens away from the environs of the house.¹⁷

From the late 1820s onwards the depression in gardening, caused by the high taxation of the Napoleonic Wars, was coming to an end. Aristocracy and the gentry competed to purchase and display some of the many new plants introduced into the country which Loudon estimated averaged 156 species a year from 1800 to 1816.¹⁸ The newly rich were less concerned with food and animal production which required a large acreage, but were more interested in having sufficient space to display their collections of imported trees. This was also a time of expansion of market gardens so there was a wider variety of vegetables and fruit available from local markets to satisfy a growing urban market (see Chapter Five).

Plumptre argues that nineteenth century garden design was 'essentially retrospective and derivative'.¹⁹ An alternative view was that the 1820s and 1830s were 'the most exciting and innovative period in garden history'.²⁰ These ideas are not mutually exclusive. There was a return to formal garden layouts with elaborate parterres, topiary and statuary. At the same time experiments in garden design led to an eclectic mix of multiple beds and borders and new garden areas of all shapes and sizes which incorporated new imported often highly coloured plants. Rare and tender plants were displayed singly or in combination in glasshouses or arboreta.

Nineteenth century gardens were considered to be artistic creations, a direct contrast to landscape parks where nature had been embellished and improved by designers such as Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and his followers. Early in the century garden design had two competing styles, the picturesque and the gardenesque. The chief protagonists for the fashion of the picturesque were influential writers such as Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight. They considered that landscape should be laid out and viewed as if it were a painting, by Claude Lorraine or Poussin for example. Features of the picturesque included artificial 'ruins', rocks, dead trees and wandering streams, characterised by 'roughness, abruptness and sudden variation'.²¹

Humphry Repton favoured a more utilitarian approach, especially near a mansion. In principle he was against land being used purely for aesthetic purposes, and maintained that 'the first object... ought to be convenience, and the next picturesque beauty'.²² His

designs formed a transition between the landscape parks of Brown and the return to formality and bedding of the 1850s. He recommended terraces to link house and garden and incorporated flower gardens into his plans. Many of his shrub borders had a dual purpose; to display scented and colourful plants, but also to screen working areas of the estate from the immediate view of the house.

Loudon, an admirer of Repton, encouraged planting in what he termed a 'gardenesque' style. This term was later adapted to indicate an informal method of planting, but Loudon understood it to mean that plants were set out randomly, with plenty of space between to demonstrate the 'individual perfections' of each species so that the beauty of each was highlighted.²³ Artistically, this demonstrated the 'unnatural', artificial nature of a garden, but there were other practical reasons for this method of gardening. Exotic plants were expensive and often (initially), as at Horswell, only single specimens were bought.²⁴ If a garden owner was a member of the Horticultural Society, they could enter a ballot for single specimens of new introductions, if not they had to wait until nurserymen had propagated sufficient plants for sale.²⁵ Gardeners needed to learn about the characteristics of new plants; it was easier to observe and record the habits of individual specimens if they stood on their own. There was also an element of one-upmanship with owners and head gardeners being able to exhibit expensive rare specimens to garden visitors.

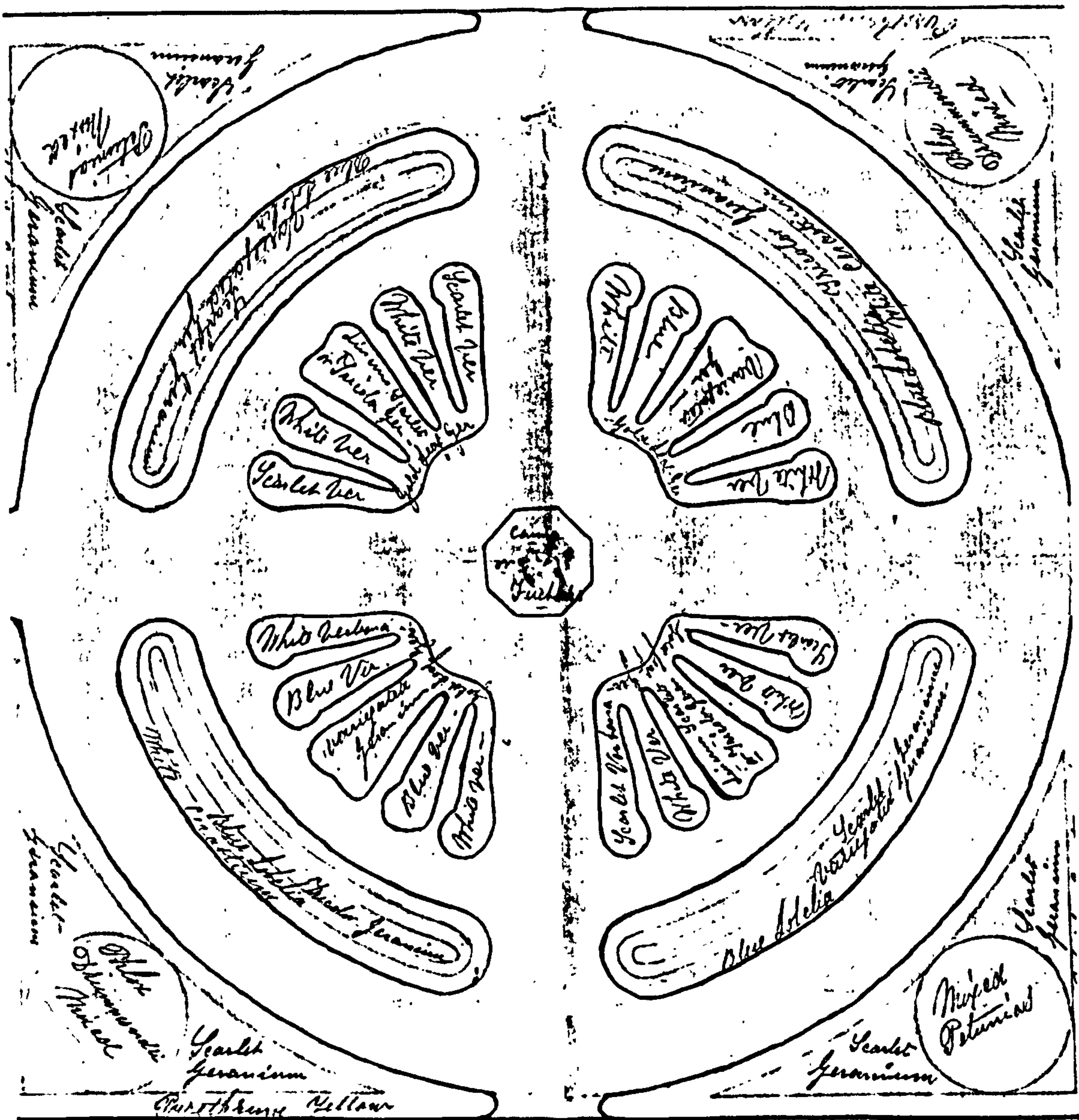
Head gardeners at Bicton were supporters of the gardenesque style. Although he thought more space should have been left around individual trees, Loudon admired the arboretum, laid out by Robert Glendinning during the winter of 1839 to 1840, for 'the very careful manner in which the plants have been planted on raised hills of prepared soil, and carefully staked and mulched'.²⁶ James Barnes used a similar method to replant the monkey-puzzle avenue, when the driveway was widened, where the trees were set on mounds to display the junction of the tree trunks with their roots. Later he planted *Wellingtonia* on large individual mounds.²⁷

Designers who worked in Devon included Repton who created a red book for the garden at Luscombe Castle, Dawlish, for the Hoare family. He also designed the gardens at Endsleigh for the Duke of Bedford, while Kemp was responsible for the garden at Knightshayes. At Kitley, a plan for an elaborate and colourful flower bed, probably produced on a visit to the Bastards, was drawn by Francis Chantrey, who was

better known for his sculpture. Accounts for work in the ‘new flower garden’ suggest it was put into place a year later in 1832 (see Figure 1:1).²⁸

Local designers included Thomas Gray of Mamhead, who as early as 1779 had placed a notice in the *Exeter Flying Post* to the effect that he was available to lay out ‘Parks, Lawns and Pleasure Grounds in the modern taste’.²⁹ It is known that Gray worked at Powderham in 1808 and 1809, being paid £500 for unspecified work.³⁰ He had set himself up as a designer in competition with John Veitch of Killerton, the head gardener and steward who laid out the grounds there. Veitch, founder of the famous Veitch nurseries, was reputed to have worked not just in Devon but in most counties in the country and was ‘well recommended by several Gentlemen’.³¹

Figure 1:1. Plan of flower garden for Kitley by Sir Francis Chantrey c1831



Source: PWDRO 540/14/6.

Veitch's son and grandsons also designed and planted gardens for many of the gentry, using the nursery of Veitch and Son as suppliers of plant material; it is probable that the nursery firm provided plants for many of Devon's nineteenth century gardens. Robert Taylor Pince, of the earlier nursery of Lucombe and Pince was also responsible for designing and laying out gardens, including the rosary at Winslade, and the new plot at Sea Grove House in Dawlish.³²

By the 1850s gardening had become much more labour intensive. This was due to the system which called for the propagation and planting of thousands of bedding plants, a return to the fashion for box-edged beds, topiary, otherwise known as 'vegetable sculpture', and the extension of the growing season with the use of forcing houses. The increased use of topiary was not popular with all gardeners and was ridiculed in the press as being 'unnatural' and 'offensive to good taste'.³³ George Glenny wrote: 'We are no advocates for trimming shrubs after the manner of our forefathers; we want no sugar-loaves and pyramids in box, no peacocks and dates cut out of yew'.³⁴ However, sculpted plants had the advantage of looking good in both summer and winter and were useful in small gardens, or where all year round interest was required, so topiary became very popular, especially with middle class garden owners.³⁵ Plants used included bay, beech, box, cypress, holly, hornbeam, juniper, privet, laurel, and rosemary, all of which could be arranged as individual bushes, mazes or hedges. Skilled labour was required to clip topiary plants at least once annually, and to keep specimens clear from snow in winter to prevent breakages.³⁶

As houses became more ornate, owners demanded a setting to match. The castellated mansion, home of Charles Wheaton, at Bassett Park, Withycombe Raleigh, had:

...a model cottage approached by serpentine walks, and surrounded by artificial rock work and other ornaments. The lake is crossed by a curious rustic bridge, leading to a plantation on the higher ground which commands a fine view of Exmouth.³⁷

House and garden were connected with French windows, through conservatories, flower corridors or verandahs, onto terraces. This was typified by the Cottage Orn , such as Endsleigh, the Duke of Bedford's hunting lodge and Knowle Cottage at Sidmouth, the home of Mr Fish. The latter was very popular with garden visitors.³⁸ It had 'a verandah, three hundred and fifteen feet long, by twelve wide', which contained flower-stands that held 'not less than four thousand plants'.³⁹ Labour was needed to keep the double pots

in the flower-stands watered to reduce the effects of drying out from wind and sun. These pots, and the climbing plants on the oak verandah supports, also had to be kept trimmed to a state of 'extreme neatness and elegance'.⁴⁰

Knowle Cottage also contained an Italian garden. The formality of Italianate gardens such as those designed by Charles Barry at Shrubland Park, Suffolk, and William Andrews Nesfield at Witley Court, Worcestershire, looked back to the time before landscape parks became popular. Terraces were decorated with statuary, urns, balustrades and fountains. Scrollwork parterres, designed by Nesfield, contained box hedging surrounding coloured gravels. In Devon, grand gardens such as Watcombe Park, Mamhead, Bishopstowe, Winslade and Streatham Hall⁴¹ had examples of gardens designed in the Italianate style, as did smaller villa gardens at Babbacombe Court and Woodcot. At Creedy Park the 'French, American and English Gardens, replete with splendid conservatories, fountains and vases' were reputedly laid out by W.A. Nesfield.⁴² This was almost certainly journalistic license on the part of the author of an advertisement designed to entice people to visit the garden as there seems no other evidence to support Nesfield's interest, and, according to a later report in the *Exeter Flying Post*, many visitors had problems recognising the gardens and their contents as previously described in the newspaper.⁴³

Country house visiting became a popular activity from the 1770s, first among the rich, then the middle class.⁴⁴ The housekeeper showed visitors over the house, the head gardener was frequently in charge of escorting visitors around an estate. In Devon several houses were particularly famous for their gardens. These included Mamhead, Oxton, Saltram, and Ugbrooke, with 'magnificent trees and beautiful lawns', or Watcombe Park, 'planted with nearly every cone tree that could be obtained'.⁴⁵ Glowing descriptions were written in guide books and directories, for example at Endsleigh:

The view from the Terrace, - the Dairy dell, watered by a running stream: the Alpine garden, with its Swiss Cottage; the numerous paths winding along the banks of the Tamar, and the other sylvan attractions, are so enchantingly disposed as to render Endsleigh one of the loveliest spots in Devonshire. The beautiful lawn, gardens and pleasure grounds immediately encompassing the mansion comprise about 20 acres and beyond them are about 1935 acres of woods and coppices, and 1487 acres of plantations....⁴⁶

Tickets to view prestigious gardens were sold by local agents and a portion of the takings distributed among the garden men.⁴⁷

Gardens became more elaborate with discrete areas connected, but hidden from each other by ornamental shrubberies or trellis work and pergolas made of timber or stone. These features created height in gardens and were covered by climbing plants, such as roses, ivy and variegated creepers, which needed constant attention to maintain tidiness. Thomas Yole, John Southcott and George Hendy at Endsleigh spent most of the year 'tying in creepers' and 'pruning' the plants that climbed the house, the pergolas and trellis, as well as tending other trees and shrubs in the garden.⁴⁸

When bedding out became fashionable as a method to display geraniums, verbenas, calceolarias and highly coloured plants, the gardener had an opportunity to design his own colour combinations, bed size and shapes. Propagation and planting out thousands of bedding plants created work for many gardeners in private gardens and parks, who also had to keep the edges of multiple beds neatly trimmed. Colour wheels, based on the colours of the rainbow were used to contrast or blend colour in the beds, or plants of a similar shade were used to fill one bed at a time.⁴⁹ Bedding experiments led to pincushion beds 'that are planted with a self-colour as a ground and dotted over with contrasting plants', geranium pyramids and floral baskets.⁵⁰

The fashion for carpet bedding became very popular and quickly spread to public parks, where competition was strong between park gardeners to produce the most elaborate shapes and patterns. Trees and shrubs in many industrial cities succumbed to polluted air and had to be replaced at regular intervals. Massed flowers could be planted in different shapes, either flat or inclined, and the cost of re-making a bedding scheme was only a fraction of that of replacing woodier plants. Ribbon beds were created alongside paths with different species of plant for each strand, usually in a red, white and blue pattern. To counteract criticism of massed bedding for its gaudy colours and lack of subtlety, sub-tropical beds were introduced based on plants with dramatic foliage and unusual leaf shapes such as the banana, or ferns, that were under-planted with coleus. This style of planting, pioneered by John Gibson at Battersea Park, was especially suited to sea-side parks and gardens.

As with all garden fashions, carpet bedding had its supporters and detractors. Shirley Hibberd's complaint was that it only produced a good display for a short season, 'and for the remaining nine months of the year it is a dreary blank'.⁵¹ He suggested instead 'a garden rich in trees and shrubs, with ample breadth of well-kept lawn or more use of

plants with distinctive leaf colour'. He recommended the use of perennials, hardy non-native plants and low-maintenance naturalised bulbs.⁵² William Robinson also objected to summer bedding 'or marshalling the flowers in stiff lines and geometrical patterns, [which] is entirely a thing of our own precious time, and "carpet" gardening is simply a further remove in ugliness'.⁵³ While, in 1879, amateur gardener Henry Bright moaned:

I am heartily weary of the monotony of modern gardens, with their endless Pelargoniums, Calceolarias, and Verbenas. Some few such beds I cannot of course dispense with, but I am always glad when I can *reclaim* a bed for permanent herbaceous plants.⁵⁴

Bright, instead of using the more common bedding plants to which he had taken a strong dislike, planted individual beds with a single perennial species, such as *Primula japonica*, nemophila, anemone, ranunculus, briar roses and lilies.⁵⁵

In 1885 the *Beeton Book of Garden Management* commented, 'in villa gardening at the present time, the mixed garden holds a prominent place, and even the kitchen garden, pure and simple, is no longer looked upon as a place devoid of interest'.⁵⁶ Garden fashion had evolved to incorporate a variety of styles which included designs by William Robinson, Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll. Part of the arts and craft movement, they were opposed to the artificiality of the bedding system with its mass production of plants and garish 'unnatural' colours. After a three day visit to Bicton gardens in 1865, Robinson declared he 'did not care for Mr. Barnes's house plants'; although he admired the flower garden, calling it an 'open-air drawing room'.⁵⁷ Robinson thought glasshouses were an expensive waste of money and a refuge for lazy gardeners. In 1900 he advised on the long terrace at Killerton, advocating the use of yuccas and suggesting the removal of a greenhouse to be replaced with a 'pretty garden of tea roses'.⁵⁸

Gertrude Jekyll was a lover of 'the beauties that are so often presented by little wayside cottage gardens'.⁵⁹ One of the most important and influential women gardeners of the nineteenth century, her theories of colour combining and herbaceous planting were passed on through her writings and she became an inspiration to many. Jekyll worked closely with Lutyens; her extravagant planting formed a contrast to the formality of the hard landscaping of the architect. This was particularly effective at Hestercombe in Somerset. Partly influenced by Jekyll, herbaceous borders became popular. Gardeners who wished to change their borders were recommended to experiment first with the use

of cut flowers, as otherwise ‘in attempting innovations the effects produced, although startling enough, may be utterly bizarre and disagreeable’.⁶⁰

Glasshouses

Scientific advances, together with industrial and commercial growth affected garden design and practices as they did other areas of Victorian society. The study of botany had led to a better understanding of a plant’s requirements for survival. This encouraged gardeners to look for the cheapest and most effective methods of increasing light and warmth in glasshouses. In 1816 Loudon invented a curved glazing bar in wrought iron, the patent of which he sold to D. & E. Bailey in Holborn.⁶¹ Joseph Paxton developed Loudon’s earlier ideas for ridge and furrow glazing, designed to catch maximum light but which could be built with traditional wooden glazing bars. However, when he built the Great Stove at Chatsworth, he combined both methods, creating a metal curvilinear house with ridge and furrow glazing.

The cost of early glasshouses was always expensive even with local builders. When a new greenhouse and a hothouse were constructed at Maristow during the years 1821 to 1823, the cost totalled almost one thousand pounds which was a huge capital outlay compared with the amount paid for plants in the same period (£14.4s.6d). To put this into context, garden labourers earned nine shillings a week, less than £24 a year, and the head gardener, Martin Curley, earned just £40 annually.⁶²

In 1847 James Hartley developed a process which made it possible to manufacture large sheets of clear unblemished glass. This, if fitted correctly, evened out the temperature between the top and the bottom of the greenhouse, where there had previously been a discrepancy of up to fifteen degrees.⁶³ Prior to this there had been only two types of glass suitable for glasshouses. Broad glass was neither entirely flat nor had the same thickness within sheets and contained air-bubbles and other imperfections. The alternative, which Keith Lemmon claims was preferred by gardeners, was Crown glass which was spun by hand.⁶⁴ This produced smaller, greenish panes with a slight curvature, but let through insufficient light which caused the plants to become drawn. Light was also lost by the numbers of fixing bars needed to hold the small panes and by dust gathering in the overlaps. Larger panes, although effective in letting through more light, required shading in summer which created different problems for gardeners, and a job for their wives in sewing blinds.⁶⁵

The most common method of fixing the panes was with putty and glazing pins. By 1870 a thermo-plastic putty had been invented, which allowed for expansion of iron bars without breaking the glass.⁶⁶ For maintenance, it was recommended that greenhouses be painted with lead-free oxide paint from the Torbay Paint Company. It was reputedly without fumes that could be fatal to plants, had good coverage and, supposedly, lasted three times as long as lead paint. For the discerning, it came in seventy different shades and colours.⁶⁷

Early flued walls, used to heat glasshouses, gave way to steam heating which, in its turn, was superseded by the more efficient method of hot water heating. Boilers such as Week's patent tubular boilers, which could heat up to 750 feet of four-inch pipe, were introduced in the 1830s. Easy to clean and maintain, they were guaranteed for a minimum of ten years but generally lasted much longer.⁶⁸

Ownership of glasshouses, palm and orchid houses and conservatories became one of the fashion statements of the Victorian age, encouraged by Loudon who stated, 'a Greenhouse, Orangery, or Conservatory, ought if possible, to be attached to every suburban residence'.⁶⁹ For the wealthy they held huge exotic plants, orchids and ferns from all over the world. James Barnes, head gardener at Bicton, listed in 1842 the contents of thirteen glass houses on the estate which included the Heath House, Palm House, and the New Holland House, most of which held a variety of exotic plants from camellias to bananas.⁷⁰ For estates with a comprehensive glasshouse range 'the expenditure on the Glass Houses... [was] always a heavy item'.⁷¹ Bicton annual garden accounts show that in 1854 'John Penny, Painter' was paid £43.6s.8d for painting the glasshouses; in 1856 he received £91.15s.3d and in 1858 he was paid £42.10s for painting the orangery. Glaziers were paid from a separate account.⁷²

Reduced building costs brought conservatories within the reach of middle class gardeners; some were just large enough to house a few ferns, others housed tea roses, a favourite flower of the Victorians. For those who could not afford, or did not have the space for a conservatory, a Wardian case could be used to display ferns indoors. The sealed atmosphere of the case was also ideal to protect indoor plants from the fumes of coal fires and gas lamps.⁷³

Specialist equipment such as hygrometers were developed to register heat and humidity; watering and careful monitoring were needed to protect large numbers of plants now in

danger of leaf burn. Apprentices and young journeymen gardeners were needed to open and close ventilation systems to regulate the temperature in houses. The number of bothies increased to enable them to live near to the glasshouses which were tended day and night.

New skills (of indoor gardening) had to be developed, to propagate large numbers of plants and to breed and hybridise exotics. Gardeners could spend the whole day working in glasshouses, which though comfortable for plants was tiring for the men. Robert Aughtie found working in the grand conservatory at Chatsworth 'hot and unhealthy'. He recorded the temperature at 94 degrees Fahrenheit on 18th March 1849.⁷⁴ He was not the only one who suffered:

To be in a stove temperature during winter and spring varied by an occasional week or so in a cold house and looking after fires in the generally ill-fitted stoke-holes usually full of dust and sulphur while the fires are being attended to, are a state of things likely to try the constitution of the hardiest.⁷⁵

Glasshouse or 'indoor' gardeners worked regularly on a Sunday to tend and monitor 'house' plants. This was usually done by apprentices or stokers, but at Chatsworth someone was also needed to act as foreman and to show visitors around.⁷⁶ Aughtie worked on Sundays every six to eight weeks in the Conservatory, sharing duties with several colleagues. This compared with the fortnightly Sunday morning duty when he moved to the glasshouse range in the kitchen gardens from November 1849.⁷⁷

The development of glasshouses, conservatories, and better boiler technology, which provided warmth for germination and protection for cuttings, encouraged the increase in importation of tender plants. Ambassadors and travellers had brought back cuttings and seeds from their visits abroad since medieval times and in the seventeenth century the Tradescants travelled round Europe, Africa, Russia and America, collecting plant material from the wild and sending specimens to London. The advent of the Wardian case in the 1830s, sponsored by Loddiges of Hackney, ensured the survival of many more plant seedlings, which no longer died on long sea voyages home but survived in sealed glass cabinets.⁷⁸ Loddiges was the leading nursery sending out plant-hunters in the first half of the nineteenth century, but did not survive beyond the middle 1850s. Their mantle was taken up and superseded by the firm of Veitch and Sons of Exeter and London, who from 1840 until 1905 sent out twenty two plant hunters to bring back new species from across the globe.⁷⁹ The Veitch nurserymen of Exeter trialled many new

varieties in the mild climates of Devon and Cornwall, working closely with local head gardeners. Nurseries were quick to utilise scientific advances relating to the understanding of plant growth and reproduction and employed hybridizers such as John Dominy, who worked with Veitch in Exeter and London, to increase the hardiness, the colour and the range of plants.

Although Devon gardens held plenty of glasshouses, many new introductions survived without the need for heat and cover because of the mild climate. Citrus fruit had been grown in the county since (about) the 1760s with plants raised in pots.⁸⁰ These were over-wintered in orangeries and put out in the summer when there was no chance of a frost. At Coombe Royal a freestanding wall of arches was constructed for the sole purpose of growing outdoor citrus fruit and in 1864 a local guide book stated:

The orange walk presents great attractions to strangers, unaccustomed as they probably are to the sight of oranges, lemons and citrons flourishing in the open air and bringing their fruit to perfection with only the occasional protection of straw mats placed against the recesses in the walls at night.⁸¹

It is not certain when the wall was built, but Loudon commented on the quality of the citrus fruit in 1842 when he visited Devon and had published an account of the wall in the *Gardener's Magazine* in 1834.⁸² Other gardens in the county which supported citrus fruit grown outside were at Woodcot, Salcombe where 'orange, citron, lemon and lime trees [were] thriving in the open (but provided with glass protectors and slides if required),' and at Widicombe, also near the coast, where citrus fruit was reputedly grown permanently on outdoor walls as early as 1819.⁸³

Parks and Public Gardens

From the 1870s, following in royal footsteps, private gardens became venues for social gatherings of the gentry:

Mr. and Mrs. Thornton West of Streatham Hall, gave a garden party yesterday in their magnificent grounds. More than one hundred of the élite of the city and county were present.⁸⁴

Garden parties soon became fund raisers for local charities. Topsham Church Restoration Fund benefited from the party held by Mrs Hamilton in the garden of The Retreat in 1875 and by another held by the Greatwoods at Broadway House. Special occasions such as weddings, the opening of a new railway line and meetings of

Freemasons and local societies were also celebrated with garden parties.⁸⁵ The head gardener was often mentioned in local newspaper reports of these events as it was his responsibility to ensure that the gardens were looking their best and that these functions ran smoothly.

For the poor, however, there were few open spaces, especially in urban areas, that were accessible for working class sports like football and cricket, which in any case were frowned upon by reformers for their rowdiness.⁸⁶ Inner cities were places of dirt, disease and crime. Exeter had its overcrowded tenements which led to a cholera epidemic in 1832 where one in twenty were struck down by the disease.⁸⁷ While members of the middle class could and did escape to the suburbs, encouraged by local transport, the poor had no such option. Early Victorian philanthropists believed ‘zymotic’ diseases were transmitted by the polluted atmosphere of towns, therefore parks were needed to act as lungs to provide wholesome air. As early as 1833 the Select Committee on Public Walks had complained about the lack of open spaces available in towns. At a time of social unrest, park promoters suggested that areas to provide fresh air and exercise, mental stimulation and an opportunity to meet a mix of people would also help to relieve social tension. Exeter was luckier than most cities as one of the earliest public walks had been created in 1612 at Northernhay, however, there was still a shortage of space for the poor.⁸⁸ The *Exeter Flying Post*, in true campaigning mode, enthusiastically endorsed the notion of providing pleasure grounds:

where the Old, the Invalid, ... and those who have been engaged in the toils of Business, may enjoy the invigorating breeze, and Youth find an appropriate place for healthful pastime.

On a more practical note, they also hoped that pleasure gardens would ‘render the city more agreeable to strangers [visitors]’.⁸⁹

The opening of parks gave head gardeners, especially those who had worked with Paxton, such as Edward Milner, John Gibson and Edward Kemp, opportunities as designers. They also supplied business for local nurserymen who were responsible for providing and planting the new public areas.

Parks were designed to be used as educational facilities, for leisure, for healthy exercise and a place where the whole family could spend time together. However, in case not all people acted in what was considered an appropriate manner, rules were imposed for

their use. In addition to their gardening duties, park gardeners and keepers were sworn in as special constables to keep order, especially on a Sunday when the working class might visit. The pleasure grounds on the Hoe at Plymouth had thirty bye-laws; some related to the planting schemes, exhorting visitors to keep off the flower beds, not to pick or remove plants and flowers or to cut the turf, neither was soil to be disturbed or removed. Football, quoits, bowls, hockey and cricket were allowed, but only in specified areas and no game was to last longer than two hours.⁹⁰

Torquay was famous for its 'un-English' plants, which included eucalyptus, palm, bamboo and yucca which thrived in its mild climate.⁹¹ The many parks and gardens of the tourist towns created openings for park and jobbing gardeners as well as boosting the trade of local nurserymen. Steamer transport brought visitors to Ilfracombe and North Devon from Bristol, South Wales and Liverpool.⁹² The railways increased the numbers of visitors to the county, many of whom spent their time bathing, walking and collecting shells, seaweed or pebbles, taking many of these objects back to decorate their own gardens and homes.

Winter gardens became popular following the success of the Crystal Palace as a venue for the Great Exhibition in 1851. Huge glassed pavilions were filled with flowers and ornamental plants; they contained areas for walking, reading, galleries and genteel entertainment, and helped to extend the tourist season. As with other botanical or zoological gardens, they were only available to members who subscribed to their upkeep, or on payment of an entrance fee.⁹³ They were usually closed on Sunday, the only day in the week that the working class had for leisure. Some nurserymen opened their own botanic gardens to showcase their plants in natural surroundings. William Rendle's Royal Botanical Garden in Union Street, Plymouth attracted thousands of visitors to its opening in July 1850.⁹⁴ Magdalen House Classical and Polytechnic School in Exeter had opened its own botanic garden as an educational facility in 1848.⁹⁵ William Duncan, head gardener, at Treloar Warren, in Cornwall summed up the importance of these gardens as an educational facility:

The object of this garden connects itself not only with the study of the vegetable world, but with an endeavour to infuse a scientific knowledge of plants into the empirical agriculture of the community amongst which it is situated. It is intended to become a nursery for the development of all those plants which are eligible for agricultural economy by which it will operate on those who seek for its practical use, as well as on those who study botany as a branch of natural history.⁹⁶

Park keepers or superintendents lived in lodges at the entrances of the parks. They were responsible for the administration of the park as well as overseeing garden and maintenance work. In Brighton one of the responsibilities of the park staff was also care of local street trees.⁹⁷ The numbers of staff varied according to the season and the size of park; prestigious areas which attracted tourists, or a better class of person, had more work time spent on them.⁹⁸ Grass cutting was one of the most laborious and time consuming jobs, although the process was speeded up with the use of machines (see Chapter Three). The emphasis on neatness and high standards of maintenance was thought to influence park visitors to dress well and behave with decorum. Many plants discarded at the end of the season, were distributed to the poor in an effort to brighten their lives. Whether the poor had any means for keeping the plants alive is debatable and one wonders how many plants found their way into the glasshouses or gardens of the clergy and other officials in charge of their collection.⁹⁹

Summary

Reaction to diseases such as typhoid and cholera created an interest in healthier living and the Vegetarian Society was formed to encourage growing, cooking and eating more vegetables. The increased wages of the working classes in the last quarter of the century meant they too demanded more variety of fruit and vegetables from growers. As the century wore on competition from cheap imported food brought into the country in refrigerated trucks gave more choice to the urban dweller. This had the effect of raising the quality of locally grown produce and ensured growers placed more emphasis on the production of rarer varieties or out of season vegetables and fruit. The growth in the number of market gardens which surrounded towns and cities, coupled with transport of produce not grown locally, ensured that by the end of the nineteenth century a vegetable garden, which was expensive to maintain, assumed second place to the pleasure garden and in some cases was let out or sold.¹⁰⁰ Conspicuous spending on non-essentials also helped change the emphasis away from productive gardens to pleasure gardens. Victorian gardens were exuberant creations which made use of new plants and bulbs to extend the colourful life of a garden from spring displays to autumn colour.

Estate gardens were split into discrete departments which gave an opportunity for gardeners to specialise rather than being generalists. The increase in the numbers of glasshouses in gardens and nurseries required new skills from gardeners. Head

gardeners such as Mr James Griffin (Cowley House, Exeter) and Mr Charles Booth (Downes) who exhibited at horticultural shows received the appellation 'Scientific and clever'.¹⁰¹ Glasshouse staff, responsible for mass production of bedding plants, or care and hybridization of expensive exotics, became more important than the kitchen gardener who moved down the scale from being the most valued at the beginning of the century to the least valued by the end.

With their wealth, and their determination to compete with the aristocracy and gentry, it was the middle class enthusiasts in their new gardens who took advantage of the flood of imported and hybridised plants and who drove garden fashions. Even quite small gardens were planted with individual specimen trees such as the Briars in Alphington, which also contained a short monkey puzzle avenue imitating the much longer avenue at Bicton. A gardener was an essential member of staff, even if his role had to be combined with that of a coachman. Estate gardens were modified according to usage, necessity and finance. Apart from a few showcase gardens there would have been no need to radically change established gardens unless ownership of the estate changed through a sale, marriage or inheritance, when a new owner would have put his or her personal stamp onto the garden.

The rise in the number of public parks and gardens, and hotels with pleasure grounds to attract and keep tourists in the region, not only needed garden staff to create and maintain them, but many also incorporated their own horticultural departments to reduce the expense of purchasing stock for ornamental beds. To prosper as a professional gardener, however, there was a need to keep abreast of new developments and to combine new skills with a variety of practical experience.

¹ George Glenny, *Glenny's Hand-book of Practical Gardening* (London, 1850), 1.

² Dr. Lindley, 'Messrs Veitch's Exotics' in *Exeter Flying Post (EFP)* 18.09.1851, 8b. Originally printed in the *Gardener's Chronicle (GC)*.

³ Shirley Hibberd, *The Amateur's Flower Garden: A Handy Guide to the Formation and Management of the Flower Garden and the Cultivation of Garden Flowers* (London, 1871), 34.

⁴ *Torquay and Tor Directory and General Advertiser* 10.04.1846, 3a.

⁵ Malcolm Dunn, 'The Relations Between Gardeners and Their Employers', *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* xvii, (1894), 86-95, 87-88.

⁶ North Devon Record Office (NDRO) B470/21.

⁷ *EFP* 14.08.1856, 1e, 4f.

⁸ J.C. Loudon, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* (London, 1838), 2, 36-7, 172.

⁹ Edward Kemp, *The Hand-book of Gardening, for the Use of All Persons Who Possess a Garden of Limited Extent* 10th edn (London, 1851).

- ¹⁰ *Gardener's Magazine (GM)* 9 (1833), 208-10.
- ¹¹ *GM*, 19 (1843), 241.
- ¹² Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (PWDRO) 69/M/6/155-6.
- ¹³ PWDRO 69/M/6/124.
- ¹⁴ Humphry Repton, *The Art of Landscape Gardening* (1803), ed by John Nolan (Boston & New York, 1907), 142.
- ¹⁵ Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* 3rd edn (London, 1806), 169.
- ¹⁶ Powderham Castle Archives C/2/7 Box 3.
- ¹⁷ James McPhail, *The Gardener's Remembrancer Throughout the Year, Exhibiting the Newest and Most Improved Methods of Manuring, Digging, Sowing, Planting, Pruning and Training* (London, 1807), 196.
- ¹⁸ J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London, 1822), 253.
- ¹⁹ George Plumptre, *The Garden Makers: The Great Tradition of Garden Design from 1600 to the Present Day* (London, 1993), 96.
- ²⁰ Andrew Clayton-Payne and Brent Elliott, *Victorian Flower Gardens* (London, 1988), 7.
- ²¹ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 75.
- ²² Repton, *Landscape Gardening*, 163.
- ²³ Loudon, *Suburban Gardener*, 164-6.
- ²⁴ Devon Record Office (DRO) 316 add 3M/FA14/22 (1834).
- ²⁵ Lady Rolle won three *Pinus* species in a ballot in 1861 see *Proceedings of the Royal Horticultural Society* Vol 1 (London, 1861), 211. William Barron, *The British Winter Garden* (London, 1852), 6.
- ²⁶ *GM* 8 (1842), 553.
- ²⁷ *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* 21.01.1862, 338.
- ²⁸ PWDRO 540/14/6; 74/375; *GM* 18 (1842), 542.
- ²⁹ *EFP* 06.08.1779.
- ³⁰ DRO 1508M Devon/Estate/Account Books V17 Powderham Tradesmen's Ledger.
- ³¹ *EFP* 17.03.1785, 2d.
- ³² PWDRO 874/2/2; *GM* 19 (1843), 242; *The Gardener's Magazine*, 14.10.1882, 546.
- ³³ Wilson Flagg, 'The Topiary Art', *The Magazine of Horticulture, Botany and all Useful discoveries and Improvement in Rural Affairs* (Boston, 1859), 266-270.
- ³⁴ Glenny, *Practical Gardening*, 345.
- ³⁵ Its use also demonstrated that an owner was wealthy enough to employ a gardener to clip the 'greens'.
- ³⁶ See *GM* 15 (1839), 379; Jane Loudon, *The Ladies' Companion to the Flower Garden* (London, 1841), 58, 118, 211, 290; Shirley Hibberd, *The Town Garden: A Manual for the Management of City and Suburban Gardens* (London, 1855), 25.
- ³⁷ William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon including the City of Exeter* (Sheffield & London, 1850), 253.
- ³⁸ *EFP* 29.05.1856, 3e. Entrance was by ticket only, and steamers came from Teignmouth and Dawlish to bring visitors to the garden.
- ³⁹ D.M. Stirling, *The Beauties of the Shore: Or, A Guide to the Watering-Places on the South-East Coast of Devon* (Exeter, 1838), 118.
- ⁴⁰ T.C. Paris, *A Hand-book for Travellers in Devon and Cornwall* (London, 1851), 26.
- ⁴¹ Reed Hall of the University of Exeter.
- ⁴² *EFP* 5.08.1852, 8f.
- ⁴³ *EFP* 26.08.1852, 4b-c.
- ⁴⁴ Adrian Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist: A History of Country House Visiting* (London, 1998), 91.
- ⁴⁵ *Cockrem's Guide to Torquay and its Neighbourhood* (1840), 26, 196.
- ⁴⁶ *White's* (1850), 622.
- ⁴⁷ DRO 7140 (96M) *East Devon Rental and Account*, 1887, 1891.
- ⁴⁸ DRO 3610Z and add/1.
- ⁴⁹ *The Cottage Gardener* 2 (1849), 262; David Thomson, *Handy Book of The Flower-Garden* 3rd edn. (Edinburgh and London, 1876), 337.
- ⁵⁰ Thomson, *Flower Garden*, 381-2.
- ⁵¹ Hibberd, *Amateur's Flower Garden*, 33.
- ⁵² Hibberd, *Amateur's Flower Garden*, 5, 17.
- ⁵³ William Robinson, *The English Flower Garden* 6th edn (London, 1898), 12.
- ⁵⁴ Henry A. Bright, *A Year in a Victorian Garden* (London 1989), 54. First published as *A Year in a Lancashire Garden* (London, 1879).
- ⁵⁵ Bright, *A Year*, 70, 84.
- ⁵⁶ S. O. Beeton, *The Book of Garden Management* [1885] facsimile edn (Hertfordshire, 1985), 18.
- ⁵⁷ W. Robinson, 'The Grounds and Gardens at Bicton', *EFP* 20.12.1865, 6d/e reprinted from GC.
- ⁵⁸ DRO 1148M/Box 18/4 Letters from William Robinson to Sir Thomas Acland 27.01.1900 and 10.03.1900.

- ⁵⁹ Gertrude Jekyll, *Colour Schemes for the Flower Garden* [1908] repr. (Woodbridge, 1990), 246.
- ⁶⁰ *The Country Gentlemen's Catalogue of Requisites for the house, field, farm, garden, stable, kennel &c.* [1884] repr. (London c1969), 15-16.
- ⁶¹ It was this company that built the first free standing curvilinear glasshouse at Breton Hall, Yorkshire in 1827 at a huge cost of £14,500, see Tom Carter, *The Victorian Garden* (London, 1984), 72.
- ⁶² PWDRO 874/3/23-25.
- ⁶³ *Annals of Horticulture and Year-Book of Information on Practical Gardening for 1848* (London, 1848), 574-5.
- ⁶⁴ Kenneth Lemmon, *The Covered Garden* (London, 1962), 88-89.
- ⁶⁵ Emma Northmore was paid 3s for helping to make four conservatory blinds in April 1874 at Maristow, see PWDRO 874/24/2.
- ⁶⁶ *The Gardener* (1870), 96.
- ⁶⁷ Proprietors Messrs. Stevens & Co. of 26 Billiter Street, London. The Oxide came from Brixham in Devon; Beeton, *Garden Management*, 395.
- ⁶⁸ Beeton, *Garden Management*, 427.
- ⁶⁹ Loudon, *Suburban*, 108.
- ⁷⁰ GM 18 (1842), 564, 617; GM 19 (1843), 21, 24, 27, 29, 30, 33.
- ⁷¹ DRO 96M Box 30/6 Letter from Robert Lipscombe, Agent to Mark Rolle, January 21 1871; DRO 7140 (96M) *Bicton Rental and Accounts* 1854, 1856 and 1858.
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- ⁷³ J. Birkenhead, *Ferns and Fern Culture*, 2nd edn (Manchester, 1897), 73.
- ⁷⁴ Basil and Jessie Harley, *A Gardener at Chatsworth: Three Years in the Life of Robert Aughtie 1848-1850* (Worcestershire, 1992), 100, 144.
- ⁷⁵ J., *The Garden*, 22.02.1902, 117.
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- ⁷⁷ Harley and Harley, *A Gardener* (Worcestershire, 1992), 168,
- ⁷⁸ David Solman, *Loddiges of Hackney: The largest hothouse in the world* (London, 1995), 44-45.
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- ⁸¹ S. P. Fox, *Kingsbridge Estuary; with Rambles in the Neighbourhood* (Kingsbridge & London, 1864), 50.
- ⁸² GM 10 (1834), 36; GM 18 (1842), 539; *Kingsbridge and Salcombe with the Intermediate Estuary Historically and Topographically Depicted* (London and Exeter, 1819), 86.
- ⁸³ DRO 1182M/Z1 Sales Catalogue 1896.
- ⁸⁴ EFP 20.09.1871, 5f; 24.07.1872, 5d, Colonel and Mrs Studd at Oxton; 24.07.1872, 7f, Mark Rolle at Stevenstone; 21.08.1872, 7e, Mr & Mrs W. H. Peters at Harefield.
- ⁸⁵ EFP 25.08.1875, 4b; EFP 17.07.1878, 5f.
- ⁸⁶ James Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950* (London, 1978), 3.
- ⁸⁷ Todd Gray, *The Victorian Underclass of Exeter* (Exeter, 2001), 13.
- ⁸⁸ EFP 10.04.1845, 2e, 3b.
- ⁸⁹ EFP 10.04.1845, 2e, 3b.
- ⁹⁰ *Bye-Laws Made by the Mayor, Aldermen & Burgesses of the Borough of Plymouth Acting by the Council as the Urban Sanitary Authority with Respect to Pleasure Grounds* (Plymouth, 1888).
- ⁹¹ United Devon Association, *The Book of Fair Devon* (Exeter, 1899-1900), 62.
- ⁹² *The Handbook of North Devon* (Exeter, c1858) 45, 57.
- ⁹³ EFP 17.07.1851, 7a; 8.06.1881, 7f.
- ⁹⁴ EFP 01.08.1850, 5d.
- ⁹⁵ EFP 20.01.1848, 2d.
- ⁹⁶ William Duncan, 'Account of the Botanic Flower Garden now forming at Trelowarren for the culture of hardy plants', GM 6 (1830), 420-423, 420-421.
- ⁹⁷ Virginia Hinze, 'Brighton Parks Department: An exploration of its early history and of its formative Superintendent, Captain Bertie Hubbard MacLaren', Post Graduate Diploma, Brighton, 1994, 12.
- ⁹⁸ Hinze, 'Brighton', 12.
- ⁹⁹ *The Gardener's Magazine*, 14.10.1882, 546.
- ¹⁰⁰ EFP 20.08.1892, 1b. Farringdon House Gardens, sale of kitchen garden plants and effects.
- ¹⁰¹ EFP 02.06.1842, 4e.

CHAPTER TWO

‘No Objection to go to Any Part’: Mobility of Gardeners, Physical and Social

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CHAPTER TWO

‘No Objection to go to Any Part’: Mobility of Gardeners, Physical and Social

The period of apprenticeship being finished, that of journeyman commences, and continues, or ought to continue till the man is at least twenty-five years of age.¹

The career structure of a successful professional gardener ensured that as he moved from work-place to work-place and progressed upwards through the garden hierarchy, he also rose in status, from predominantly working class to, at the top of his profession, the middle class. Gardeners were part of a mobile work-force moving in and out of and around the county often covering long distances. It would be expected that most gardeners would move at least once in their lives, even if it was simply to leave their father's house to set up their own establishment. In fact many young people in Devon left home to serve as farm servants or garden boys, before becoming garden apprentices and starting a series of moves taking them up the career ladder.²

Introduction

John Burnett claims that during the nineteenth century large numbers of working people frequently moved, changing jobs, being promoted, becoming unemployed, or seeking their fortune and that they viewed themselves as free agents in control of their destinies.³ Improved roads, the advent of railways, and increased education had led to more mobility in the working class as they followed jobs. A definition of migration, as a ‘residential change of a permanent or semi-permanent nature’, has been proposed by Ian Whyte who suggests that if ‘a person has moved once [this] may have predisposed them to move again’.⁴ It was true that many servants and agricultural labourers moved regularly, mostly within a twenty-five mile radius of their birthplace.⁵ The exception was for career servants who worked for the upper classes and aristocracy. These men and women travelled many miles to find work with a prestigious family. Gardeners though, as Jessica Gerard argues, were part of a distinct labour market with a higher degree of mobility than other career servants.⁶ This suggests that there were different patterns of movement connected with the occupation of a gardener. Many strove to reach the highest position they could within the garden hierarchy. They either retired successfully as head gardeners, moved into another branch of the profession or lived out their lives as practical working gardeners, continuing to work part-time when no longer

capable of working full-time. Some returned to labouring as younger men with the most up-to-date knowledge and skills took their place.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain to what extent professional gardeners, with their discrete occupation patterns, moved from job to job and to consider some of the reasons why they did so. The constant movement had lifestyle implications, such as late marriage and smaller families. An argument will be made that mobility was more a matter of economic necessity and ambition than exercising freedom of choice.

For this study gardeners have been divided into eight classes. Head gardeners (HG) managed a garden; those on their way up the career ladder worked with few or no staff; those at the top of their profession supervised a workforce of under-gardeners and labourers. Most head gardeners worked in the private sector as servants as did domestic gardeners (GD). The latter were the apprentices, journeymen and foremen who were working their way towards the eventual goal of a headship. Jobbing gardeners (JG), gardeners (G) and garden labourers (GL) were employed in both the private and commercial sector on a daily or weekly basis or to complete a specific task. Gardeners non-domestic (GND), market gardeners (MG) and nurserymen (N) were principally commercial gardeners. This category includes those who were self-employed, proprietors or owners of a commercial undertaking as well as those who worked within the industry. However, many of these men and women moved between the different branches of the profession, making it difficult to generalise about one particular section of gardeners.

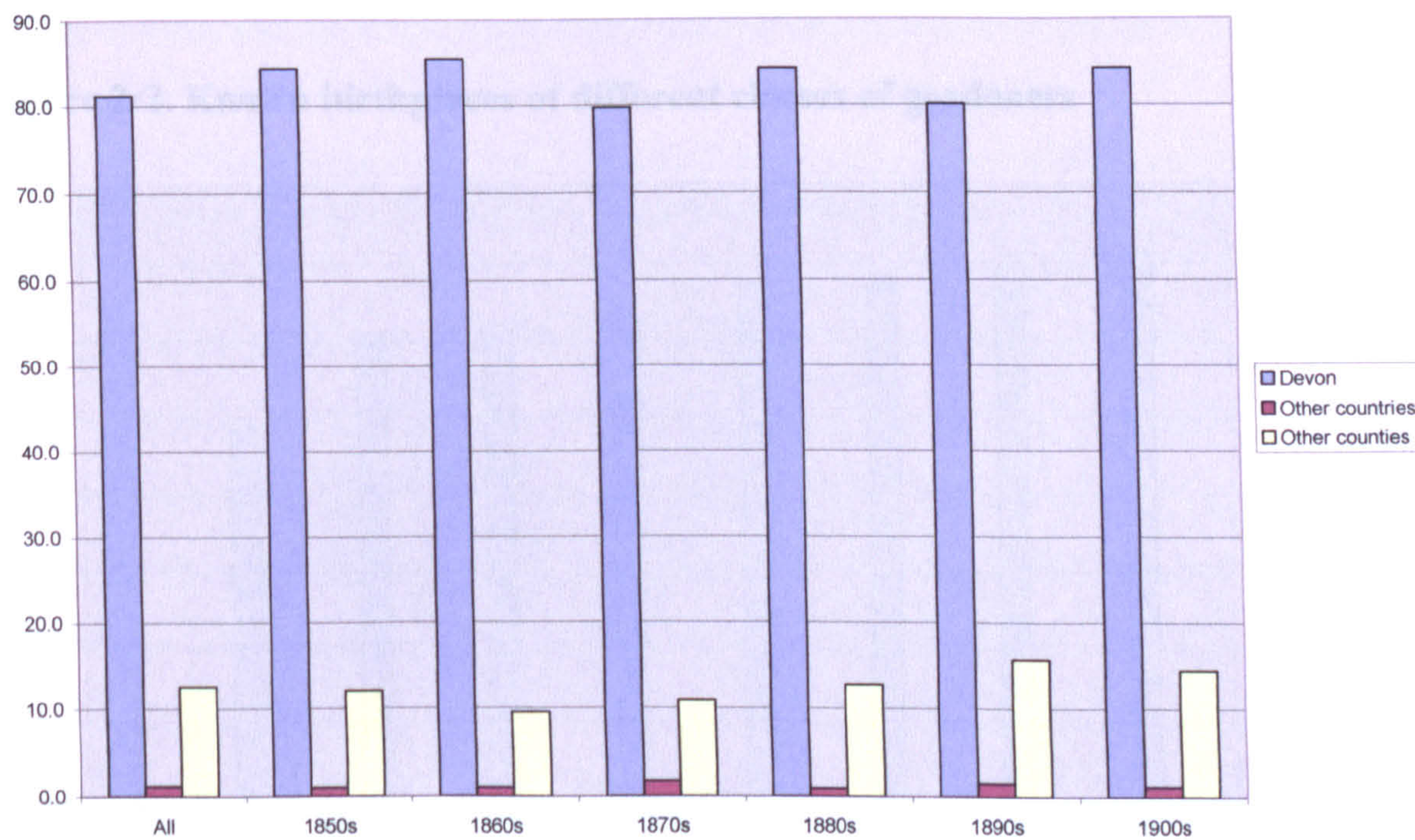
Identification of Gardeners

Using census material, parish and estate records, directories and other primary resources, it has been possible to identify over 15,000 gardeners who worked in Devon during the nineteenth century. Listed on a database, these include garden boys and garden women, those that worked in private gardens, nurseries and market gardens. Not surprisingly, information from the database shows that slightly more than eighty-one per cent of the gardeners listed were born in the county. The remainder originated from out of the county with just over one per-cent born in Europe, or outposts of the British Empire as well as from Scotland, Ireland and Wales.⁷ Twelve and a half per-cent came from forty different counties in England, not including Devon.⁸ The remaining five per-

cent of birthplaces are still unknown. As can be seen from Figure 2:1, when plotted at ten year intervals, these figures do not alter significantly over the second half of the century.

The majority of out of county gardeners came from counties which bordered Devon; twenty-eight per cent from Cornwall, nine per cent from Dorset and twenty per cent from Somerset. Four per cent were born in London, the same from Gloucestershire and Hampshire. This suggests that most movement into the county was regional.

Figure 2:1. Known birthplaces of gardeners who worked in Devon during the nineteenth century



Source: Gardener database.

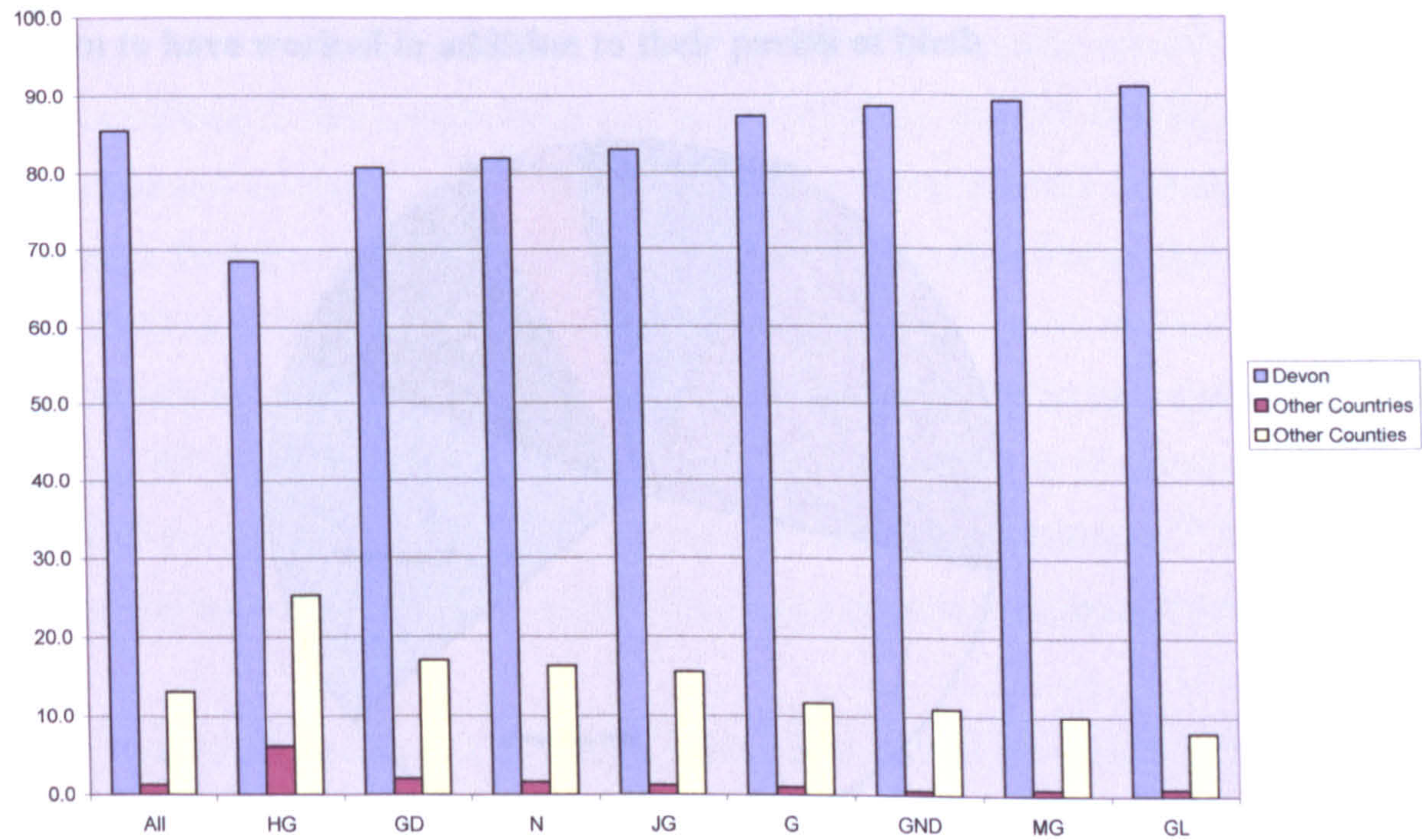
On further analysis it is possible to see that within the discrete branches of the gardening profession there were differences in the amount of movement from parish to parish, or county to county. Figures from the database suggest that garden labourers, frequently little more than agricultural labourers who happened to work in a garden, moved least. This is in line with Gerard’s findings. In the sample she analysed, she found that eighty-nine per cent of garden labourer’s children were born in the parish of the country house at which they worked. Whereas this study, which covered the whole of the county of Devon, found that seventy per cent of children of garden labourers were born in the same parish.⁹ A further twenty four per cent had moved parish at least once and only six per cent had moved twice or more. Some gardeners were listed as garden

labourers on enumerators' returns, while some garden labourers were listed as 'agricultural' or 'general labourers' which could explain, in part, the discrepancy between the findings of this study and that of Gerard.

Movement Between Parishes

As can be seen from Figure 2:2, private gardeners were more likely to have moved into Devon to take up their post, and were more than twice as likely as garden labourers to have been born out of county. Apart from garden labourers, market gardeners and non-domestic gardeners moved the least. This was because many had small holdings, often family run, with the business passed down from father to son (see Chapter Five).

Figure 2:2. Known birthplaces of different classes of gardeners

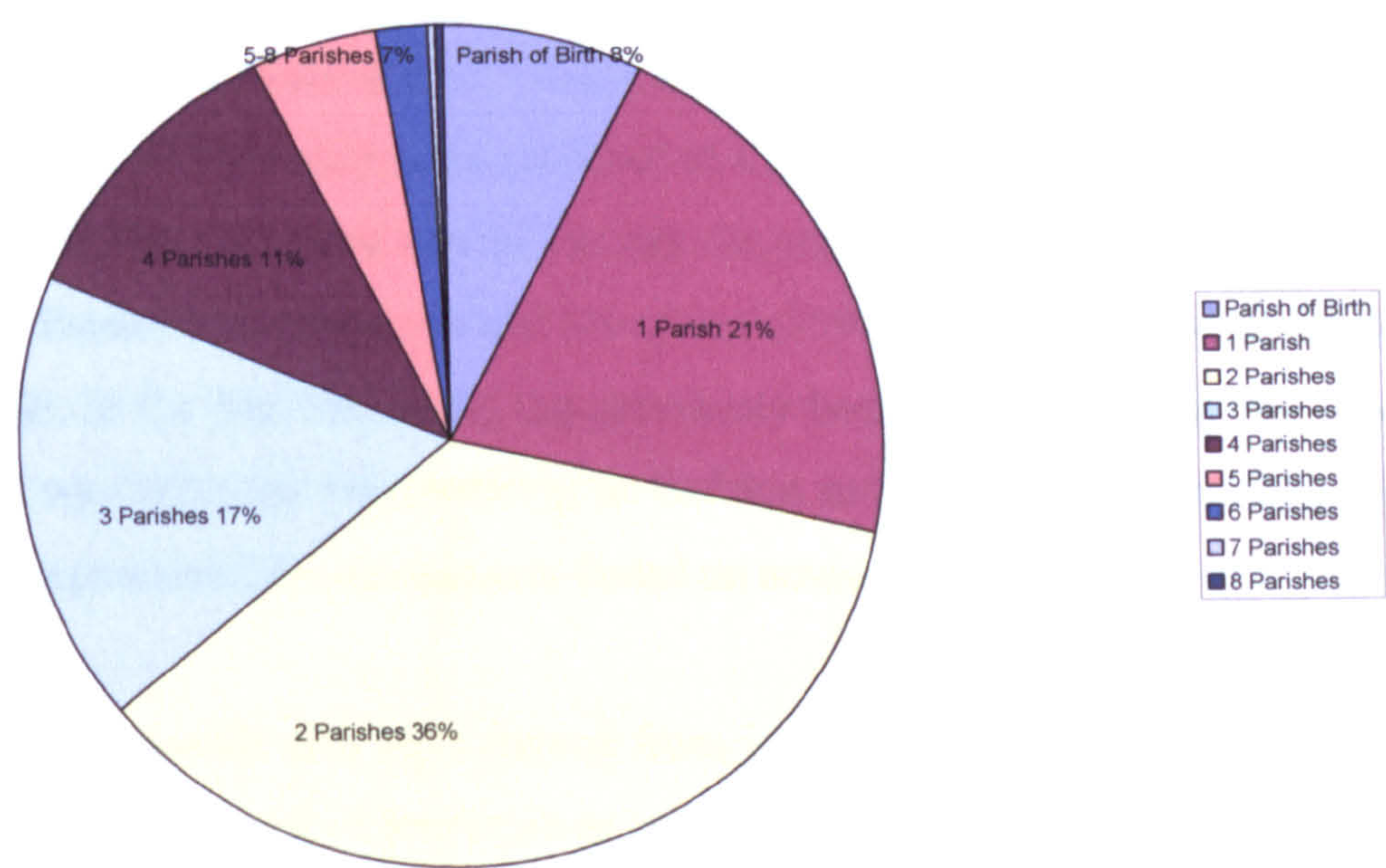


Source: Gardener database.

When comparing head gardeners with the rest of those on the database, results show that sixty-eight per cent were born in Devon in contrast with eighty-five per cent for all gardeners. There was a high proportion of Scottish men as Scots gardeners were highly prized; they were considered to be 'better educated' than English gardeners.¹⁰ The remainder came from thirty-two counties all over Britain. Their wives came from sixteen counties and four different countries, but that is saying more about their migratory movements than that of their husbands; many had previously been servants.

For the purposes of illustrating the mobility of professional gardeners a sample of 279 head gardeners listed in Devon census records, who had had children and who had worked in the county, was chosen. These records were used to work backwards to determine how many moves had been made on the way up the career ladder. To do this, census returns were checked to see how frequently a man had moved from one ten year period to another. Added to this was an analysis of the birthplaces of their children to determine how frequently their fathers had moved within the ten years; plus any other information gleaned from additional sources. The results show that thirty-six per cent of this sample had lived in a minimum of two different parishes, seventeen per cent in three and a further eighteen per cent in four or more parishes in addition to their parish of birth, (see Figure 2:3 below). Only eight per cent appeared to have remained in their parish of birth and the remaining twenty-one per cent had moved parish at least once.

Figure 2:3. The number of places in which head gardeners in the sample are known to have worked in addition to their parish of birth



Source: Gardener database.

Using these sources will not give exact figures but only show trends. As the census was only taken every ten years, some children such as those of Amaziah Saul, head gardener at Castle Hill from approximately 1839 to 1861, did not appear in the census because they had died.¹¹ Children from other parents would have left home or were living with another relative. However, the results show that a significant number of head gardeners had moved on a regular basis after they had had children. Two of these men are known to have worked in at least seven different places; for example, Thomas German was

born in Torquay. He began work at Maristow, as a garden boy; from there he moved to Edgbaston in Warwickshire, followed by moves to Staffordshire and Worcestershire. He returned to Devon and Tamerton Foliot, then worked at Honicknowle and, in 1901, was living in Plymouth. Evidence from national obituaries of some of the more successful head gardeners suggests this was not unusual, with gardeners moving frequently to better themselves.¹² For example, John Wills, who was considered to be one of the finest floral decorators of his time, was born at Chard in Somerset in 1832. He began work at Cricket St Thomas but moved from there to a variety of gardens eventually becoming a nurseryman in London aged thirty-eight. By this time he had worked in nine different gardens throughout the country.¹³

A gardener could be in the same parish in two consecutive census returns, but that does not mean that he remained in the same garden for those ten years. He could have moved within the parish or out of the parish and back in again. Frequent moves meant some gardeners who worked in Devon do not show in any of the county returns because they were not living in the county when a census was taken. Samuel Barker, for example, worked at two nurseries, a horticultural college and four gardens including Winslade Garden in Devon before becoming head gardener at Clumber House, Nottinghamshire from 1899 to 1935.¹⁴ He does not appear on any Devon census return. Neither does Emanuel Culley, listed in the *Horticultural Directory* (1870): he had worked at Strete Raleigh, Whimble, in the late 1860s, having previously been at Hackney. By the time the 1871 census was taken he was working at Baildon in Yorkshire.¹⁵ Therefore the numbers of moves presented are a minimum, based on actual evidence found.

Many head gardeners would also have moved from job to job before getting married. For example, of over one hundred journeymen and apprentice gardeners who trained in some of Devon's more prestigious gardens such as Castle Hill, Bystock, Bicton and Flete, or in the Veitch or Lucombe nurseries in Exeter, thirty one per cent came from other counties (see Figure 2:4). Forty-three per cent of the total remained in Devon; thirty one per cent as gardeners and twelve per cent as head gardeners. Albert Ballhatchet, for example, trained at Poltimore, worked at Streatham Hall from 1872 to 1876, then became head gardener to the Bishop of Exeter, working in both Devon and at the Bishop's Palace in Fulham.¹⁶ The majority of gardeners who trained in Devon moved to work in gardens across Britain.¹⁷ They did not stay in the county to work unless they found a position as a head gardener; eight per cent of this sample returned to

their parish of birth to work.¹⁸ John Bartlett from High Wycombe who trained in the bothy at Castle Hill became a head gardener at Bridekirk in Cumberland and Thomas Shingles from Lillingstone, Buckinghamshire went from Bicton to eventually become head gardener at Tortworth in Gloucestershire. Another Bicton trained gardener, William Truelove, went to work at Kew, where he spent the remainder of his working life. A Devon born gardener from Bere Ferrers, Richard Nicholas, was a foreman in the bothy at Castle Hill in 1881 and, unusually, went on to become the head gardener there. Records have been found of over two hundred other gardeners who were born in Devon, but worked in other counties, proving the movement was two ways.

Figure 2:4. Movement of some gardeners who trained in Devon

Gardeners who trained in Devon	No	%
Devon born remaining in Devon as gardeners	34	31
Devon born remaining in Devon as head gardeners	7	6
Devon born working out of county as gardeners	30	27
Devon born working out of county as head gardeners	3	2.5
Devon born working out of county, but not gardening	3	2.5
Out of county men remaining in Devon as gardeners	0	0
Out of county men remaining in Devon as head gardeners	7	6
Out of county men working out of county as gardeners	20	18
Out of county men working out of county as head gardeners	6	5
Out of county men working out of county, but not gardening	2	2
	112	100

Source: Gardener database and census returns.

Reasons for Moving from One Position to Another

The most important reason for gardeners to make regular moves was the professional requirements of the career gardener. John Loudon suggested that following an apprenticeship a journeyman gardener needed to acquire as much work experience as possible:-

During this period, he ought not to remain above one year in any one situation; thus, supposing he has completed his apprenticeship in a private garden at the age of twenty-one, and that his ultimate object is to become a head-gardener, he ought first to engage himself a year in a public botanic garden; the next year in a

public nursery; that following, he should again enter a private garden, and continue making yearly changes in the most eminent of this class of gardens, till he meets with a situation as head-gardener.¹⁹

The necessity to train in different garden departments was still felt to be important in 1897 when James Mayne, head gardener to the Hon. Mark Rolle at Bicton, stated:

...a youth commencing to learn gardening should begin in the kitchen garden, where he should serve at least two years. He should then go into the flower garden for twelve or eighteen months, and then under glass. His first duty there would be to get an insight into airing, shading, and watering. He should spend one year at least in the plant and another year or more in the fruit department. The learner should then, if possible, move into another county, as climatic conditions varies greatly.²⁰

Although Mayne seems to suggest that a gardener could remain within one garden for most of his training, this was not always possible in smaller Devon gardens. As demonstrated above, some men did move regularly, if not annually as recommended by Loudon. As they travelled from one garden to another, gardeners hoped to gain experience of work in the kitchen garden, the frame yard, in glasshouses which held fruit and early vegetables or exotic plants from ferns to orchids. They needed to acquire knowledge of plant breeding and hybridisation; to be able to propagate thousands of bedding plants and know how to produce fruit and vegetables out of season. As Mayne notes, the effect of the weather in different areas was also an important factor in building a gardener's experience for future planning.²¹

Experience of commercial gardening was also important. This enabled a gardener to learn about production on a large scale in the most economic fashion and many lessons learned in market gardens or nurseries were taken back to be adapted for a gentleman's garden. Work in a nursery would enable a man to learn about plant breeding and propagation and the requirements for some of the new exotics entering the country. He also had the opportunity to build good relationships with specialists in their field. Another reason for working in the commercial sector was that he would gain experience in meeting and dealing with members of the public. As he moved up the garden hierarchy, first becoming a foreman of one department, later second in command to the head gardener, he began to learn how to manage the men under him.

Although gardens in Devon were numerous, many of them were comparatively small with a correspondingly low number of garden staff. While this may have led to an

individual gaining a wide experience of gardening across all departments, it also meant there was less choice of openings of significant status such as might have been found in larger gardens like Chatsworth in Derbyshire or Audley End in Essex. With only one foreman per garden department and only one head gardener per establishment, openings in Devon were limited when it came to promotion. There was a reluctance to appoint one gardener as foreman to men with whom he had been working as equals. If a man wanted to advance and if there were insufficient vacancies nearby, he was forced to move to where the work and the best opportunities were placed. It was not unusual for a gardener to leave the county or even the country for additional training or promotion, to return later as a foreman or head gardener as did Frederick Cavill who became head gardener at Flete.²² George Camp trained at Winslade in Clyst St Mary in 1881. He then worked in Cheshire and returned as head gardener at Culver House in Holcombe Burnell.²³

The only way for many gardeners to obtain a wage or salary rise was to move to a different establishment. Richard Luke, in charge of the flower and kitchen gardens at Saltram earned £80 per year from 1836 to 1852. His successor, John Snow earned only £70.²⁴ As will be shown in Chapter Three, wages were notoriously poor for journeymen gardeners and remained fairly consistent at ten shillings a week until the late 1860s when they began to increase slowly. By the end of the century they had reached fifteen shillings a week (see Figure 2:5). Until he reached the position of a foreman, the working gardener was paid the same as, or just a few pence more than, agricultural wages. A promotion with the addition of a few pence could make a big difference, especially if a gardener had a growing family, but owners of estates were not inclined to increase wages and salaries once set.

Figure 2:5. Wages per week excluding perquisites

	1800 to 1870			1871 to 1899		
	Min.	Max.	Mode	Min.	Max.	Mode
Boys	2s 6d	5s	4s	4s	7s	6s
Women	3s	6s	4s	4s	6s	5s
Gardeners	6s	12s	10s	10s	18s	15s
Foremen	8s	16s	12s	11s	£1.1s	18s

Source: Gardener wages database.

Hand in hand with the need for a reasonable wage was the requirement for accommodation, although this could be fairly basic. John Hambley, George Hosking, John Satterley, Richard Barton and William Brice all had rooms above stables. John Franklin, an elderly gardener in Sidmouth, slept 'in the loft'.²⁵ Apprentices and journeymen gardeners lived in bothies, which, even if not very comfortable, (see Chapter Three) was cheaper than having to pay for lodgings, especially if there was provision of vegetables and fuel. Bothy living also gave a degree of independence and comradeship. Sometimes single or widowed gardeners lived 'in the house', where a man would be housed in servants quarters and subject to house rules. This was not always a practical option, especially for kitchen gardeners who often worked long distances from the main house. Further options were to lodge with the head gardener and his wife, a daunting prospect for many youngsters, or to lodge with a garden foreman or another estate worker.

The requirement for many journeymen gardeners was that they remain single. This was to ensure their undivided loyalty to the garden in which they were working and to allow them to live in garden accommodation. James McPhail directed:

If there be not for the accommodation of a married head gardener, in or near to the garden, a house, which a good garden ought never to be without, there should be at least one room decently furnished, for one or two men to sleep in, that the hot-houses and other matters may be duly attended to, night and morning.²⁶

It would not have been easy for a man to work long hours, or through the night, when it was his turn to stoke the boilers or check the ventilation in the glasshouses, if he had a wife and family at home, especially if home was a cottage some distance away from the garden. Professional gardeners tended not to marry until they had achieved their first position as head gardener, at which point they would have received a sufficient salary with accommodation. This would allow them to support a wife and entertain visitors such as nursery representatives or other head gardeners. In a larger garden, they would also have staff to undertake garden duties at unsociable hours. The wait to find promotion with accommodation meant that many head gardeners did not marry until they were in their thirties.

If a journeyman gardener wished to get married he had several options. He could marry, but continue to live and work as a single man, living in a bothy or in garden accommodation. This happened quite frequently with the wife living nearby or with

parents, for example Eliza, wife of William Edmonds, head gardener at Moreton House, Bideford lived with her mother-in-law.²⁷ Mary Bicknell lived on her own with her two children while husband William lived in the house at Parkers Well in Exeter and Charles Bennett lived in a bothy at Bicton despite being married.²⁸ A second option was to find a position, which came complete with a cottage, where a wife would also be offered work as a charwoman, servant or dairywoman. George Ellis's wife was lodge keeper at The Wilderness in Dartmouth and Eva Denny, wife of Charles, worked as a laundress at Haldon Lodge, Dawlish.²⁹ Sometimes this was possible as a foreman or second gardener. A third option was to work as a couple 'living in' with the wife as a cook or housekeeper. In practice, this often meant limiting his career expectations and couples who settled for this option frequently worked in middle-class homes, serving the clergy, solicitors and bankers or people with a private income such as Elizabeth Strickland of Widdicombe. The wives of Simon Hill at Elm Grove in Exeter and George Flew at East Anstey were housekeepers. Charles Eden was gardener to William Sadler, Vicar of Broadhembury, whilst his wife was the cook.³⁰

Recruitment

There were several methods by which gardeners found work. These included word of mouth, the influence of head gardeners and advertisements in the local and national press. For example, it was possible that William Bickham helped find William Voysey, a position at Beckenham in Kent. Both were at Luscombe Castle in Dawlish in 1851, both were at Beckenham in 1871.³¹ Although there were servant registries and agencies such as Greens Registry Office of Exeter or the Servants' Superior Agency of Plymouth who advertised for gardeners, these were rarely for the career gardener, as they specialised in the supply of indoor servants such as maids, footmen and outdoor liveried workers.³² Agencies concentrated on staff for the middle class market; many servants in wealthier establishments obtaining their positions through other family members or by personal recommendation. Unless a groom or coachman position was to be combined with that of a gardener, agency vacancies for gardeners were couched in very general terms, presumably to get as many people registered on their books as possible. These included statements such as, 'Servants wanted' or 'Gardeners wanted' without any specific details.³³

Local and national newspapers and gardening journals all had 'Situations Wanted' and 'Vacant' columns where it was possible for someone to seek a gardener, or more usually, for a gardener's services to be advertised either by a nursery, head gardener or the gardener himself. These were in the same place in the newspaper every week; the first column of page four of the *Devon Weekly Times*, or the back page of the *Gardener's Chronicle*, for example. This made them easy to find without having to search through the whole newspaper.

Figure 2:6. 'Wanted' advertisements

GARDENER (HEAD). Married, age 36, one child. Thoroughly understands stove and greenhouse plants, early forcing. Two years' character.—J. J., Tadman's, nurseryman, Eltham, S. E.

GARDENER (HEAD). Has a thorough knowledge of his business. Married, age 33, without encumbrance. Wages £1 per week, with house.—J. W., Bosbell's, seedman, High-street, Borough.

GARDENER (HEAD). Wife, Cook and Housekeeper. Without encumbrance. Age 31. Thoroughly experienced. Highest testimonials.—Z. Y., post-office, Battersea-riam, Surrey.

GARDENER (HEAD). Married, age 34. Understands every branch of his profession. Good testimonials.—W. T., St. John's-place, Battersea-riam, Surrey.

GARDENER (HEAD). Middle-aged, no family. Great experience in hothouse, greenhouse, flower and kitchen garden. Undeniable character.—B. A., Adam's nursery, Silver-st., Edmonton.

GARDENER (HEAD). Married, age 32. Thoroughly practical knowledge of his profession. Two years' good character. W. W., Smithers, 5, Fifth-road, Croydon.

GARDENER. No objection to look after a pony and chaise. Six years' good character.—A. B., 23, Great Quebec-street, Marylebone.

GARDENER, Single-handed. Can wait at table. Willing to be generally useful. Age 24. Good character.—J. M., No. 34, Chapel-street, Liverpool-road, Islington, N.

GARDENER, or Under Gardener. Married, age 25. Understands greenhouse work. Wife understands laundry work.—G. S., Mrs. Borne's, 20, Park-road, Clapham, Surrey.

GARDENER. Age 25. No objection to attend to a horse or cow. Two years' good character.—Y. Z., Woodham's, Edith, Kent.

GARDENER, Head or Single-handed. Married, age 37. No objection to cows. Five years' good character.—O. B., Ward's, newspaper office, Denmark-hill, Camberwell, S.

GARDENER, or Groom and Gardener. Married, age 33. Thoroughly understands gardening. Can milk a cow. Good character.—A. B., Sabine's, post office, South Norwood, Surrey.

GARDENER. Married, age 31. Thoroughly understands his profession in all its branches. 4 years' good character.—A. B., post-office, Moleham, near Gravesend.

GARDENER, Second or Single-handed. Single, age 24. 2 years' character. No objection to a pony.—A. B., Cowley's, post office, Uxbridge, Middlesex.

GARDENER. Married, age 24. Understands vines, cashmere, flower and kitchen garden. Good recommendation.—W. B., Woollet's nursery, Coldharbour-lane, Brixton, S.

GARDENER. Single, age 25. Understands vines, stove, and greenhouse plants, early forcing, flower and kitchen garden.—G. R., the gardener, Oakfield, Croydon, Surrey.

Source: *The Times* 5.09.1860, 12a.

Advertisements in *The Times* perpetuated the servant hierarchy. These began with listings for butlers, progressed through the indoor staff, then outdoor liveried servants; ‘gardeners’, even head gardeners, were placed at the end of the list of servants, below ‘coachman’ and ‘grooms’. This reflected how they were viewed, being considered neither indoor nor outdoor servants. Even within this section there was a hierarchy; advertisements for ‘head gardeners expected to superintend a garden’ were followed by those for a ‘working head’, then ‘single-handed with help’. ‘Single handed without help, which frequently required a wife to act as cook or housekeeper, came before requests for ‘foremen’, ‘journeymen’ and ‘gardeners’ with, finally, at the bottom of the list, ‘garden labourers’ (see Figure 2:6).³⁴

There were several parts to an advertisement to fill a vacancy. The first was a description of the person required, or of the man seeking a change of work. For the latter, age, marital status, family and experience were important, even height if a man was contemplating becoming a groom or coachman gardener. For those with a vacancy, age was particularly important, dependent on the position offered. Applicants to be accommodated on the estate were frequently asked to be ‘below 30’ or ‘not above 35’. Those gardeners who were to live in the house mostly had to be ‘middle-aged’ and ‘married’; the wife would be expected to work in service as well. Where a man was required to live in servant quarters the request was for someone ‘middle-aged’ and ‘single’. All were required to be without encumbrance (family).³⁵

In a country house garden single gardeners were often preferred, especially if they were to live in a bothy, or to have board or lodgings with other estate workers. A young family could be a drain on the estate – small children could not work, neither could the mother if children were too young. As ‘One of the Profession’ commented, ‘...he [the gardener] is aware that a large family is more hurtful to his future prospects than either a bad character or no character at all’.³⁶ By the time a child had reached ten or eleven, especially if male, he could be employed to work alongside his father or mother at some of the seasonal work and older sons were often encouraged as they could act as a garden or errand boy. John Petters was only nine when he began work with his father at Churchstanton in 1851; Thomas Doan aged ten, helped his father at Escot; William Bastone of Farringdon, William Reed at Heavitree, John Worth in Pilton and John Stevens from Alphington were all employed alongside their fathers aged just eleven.³⁷ Their daily tasks encompassed everything from helping with haymaking and harvesting

to weeding, watering, bird-scaring and stone picking. John Wingate was paid 2s a week as a garden boy at Saltram.³⁸ The dates that these boys were employed, from 1822 to 1891, show that the practice continued right through the nineteenth century.

A gardener’s character was of paramount importance and stock phrases were used for these by both parties (see Figure 2:7 below). Although similar wordings were used, those looking for work advertised their skills before their characteristics. Those seeking help appeared to be more concerned about the characteristics of a person than their skills. References were very important, especially if someone was to share a house with a family and employers went to a great deal of trouble to vet their future employees. Even where a man would be living on the estate, extensive references were followed up. When Andrew Voss applied for a position at Saltram early in the twentieth century, references were sought from his previous places of work and from the Rector of the parish in which he worked. The procedure from the first application for the post until he made arrangements to move onto the estate took six weeks.³⁹

Figure 2:7. Characteristics required and offered in the provincial press in order of popularity

Vacancies	Applicants
Steady	Thoroughly understands gardening
Generally useful	Steady
Active	Experienced
Respectable	Respectable
Good practical knowledge	Active
Good manager	Willing
Competent	Competent
Industrious	Thorough
Experienced	Good
Careful	Useful
Honest	Sober
Sober	Intelligent
	Industrious

Source: *Exeter Flying Post, Devon Weekly Times*.

Certain requirements demanded by employers show some of the preoccupations of society or the interests of a particular family. For Catton Hall, Burton on Trent, a youth was required to be 'a good singer and churchman'.⁴⁰ It was not uncommon that a man was requested to be 'sober' or an 'Abstainer', or that he be 'Church of England, unless a Scotch Presbyterian'.⁴¹

The third part of an advertisement was specific information about the position required or offered, for example 'Wanted Nr Exeter a working Gardener were [sic] another is kept, capable of managing a small garden and grounds with vinery, peach-house, and conservatory'.⁴² In other words, a man was required who would be a 'head' gardener and manage the garden, but who would undertake any physical work necessary. These skills were usually broken down into requirements for specific garden departments of 'flowers', 'kitchen garden', 'roses', 'fruit', and 'greenhouses', 'stoves' or 'conservatories'.⁴³

Advertisements in the *Gardener's Chronicle* were much more specific. W. G. Hodge of 49, George Street, Plymouth advertised for a 'thorough good manager' to look after '25,000 foot of glass outdoors, cut flowers, tomatoes, cucumbers, strawberries, mushrooms and ferns'.⁴⁴ Norton Hall at Daventry needed a 'Strong industrious youth to attend to fruit trees on walls and assist in kitchen garden and duty work'.⁴⁵ Those aimed at career gardeners were also more specific about salary or wage details than the provincial newspapers, probably to save a man wasting time applying for a position only to find that the remuneration was too little or that the work was not what he wanted. The selling point was often the accommodation offered, particularly if it was 'a good cottage, large garden' or a lodge.⁴⁶ The offer of a bothy appears frequently in *The Gardener's Chronicle* for both private and nursery gardens, and several gardeners state 'bothy preferred' as did S. H. Snell of Torquay.⁴⁷

The selling points for gardeners seeking work were different. They offered flexibility: 'no objection to go to any part of Great Britain or Ireland' or 'willing to go to any part of the United Kingdom'.⁴⁸ When times were hard and jobs in short supply, for example following the return of men from the Napoleonic Wars, or during the agricultural depression, gardeners offered their services cheaply: 'situation will be preferred to an emolument' and 'wages not so much an object if comfortable'.⁴⁹ When demand was

high and advertisements plentiful for trained men, they offered 'ready for immediate engagement'.⁵⁰

The cost of pre-paid advertisements ensured that advertisers did not waste words.

...not exceeding 18 words, 9d, 24 words, 1s, 30 words 1/6d, 40 words, 2/-, 50 words 2s 6d and 6d for every 10 additional words.⁵¹

However, this was an investment for both parties. An employer wanted a gardener; he was a status symbol as much as an employee. Gardeners sought a position that would either help them up the career ladder or which would give an income, or a home or both.

Advertisements in the provincial press were mostly from or aimed at the middle-class master where the gardener would often have to take on tasks additional to gardening. The most common of these was care of a horse, acting in the capacity of a groom and sometimes a coachman. Mr Chalk of South Street, Exeter required 'A Steady Man (small size)' to look after a pair of ponies and the kitchen garden.⁵² Second was that of small-holding skills, care of cows, pigs and poultry, with the wife expected to work in the dairy or in the house.⁵³ In one case the gardener was expected to double up as a gamekeeper, in another as a footman. Gardeners were also expected to clean windows and boots and shoes.⁵⁴ Aware of these requirements, gardeners would offer additional skills, suggesting that they would be willing to work as a groom, or to milk cows, or wait at table. Several offered the information that they had worked in gentlemen's residences with 'good' families, to demonstrate their knowledge of what might be expected and to appeal to the snobbery of future employers.⁵⁵

Journals were distributed nationally, bought by the head gardener or the estate for the use of trainee gardeners. The fact that Devon gardeners, not just head gardeners, placed advertisements in the journals suggests they had access to them, both in local nurseries and in private gardens such as at Escot where the *Gardener's Chronicle* was purchased from the garden account from at least 1867 to 1872.⁵⁶ Travelling from position to position became easier with the coming of the railways, which meant that gardeners were able to obtain a position a long way from where they were born or where they had trained. It was not unusual for the garden budget to cover the cost of a gardener's travel and removal to a new position.⁵⁷

Opportunities were offered to gardeners to work abroad, where English and Scottish, especially Kew trained gardeners were particularly valued. Some wealthy employers took their gardeners to Europe with them, and a request for a 'Gardener who can speak English and French to live in the South of France', suggests that there were applicants with language skills who would respond.⁵⁸ Other advertisements requested general gardeners as well as those with specific skills, such as: 'Gardener wanted to go out to Queensland Age 25-30'. and, 'Wanted: For the Colonies a good grafter and budder'.⁵⁹ In 1893 the Indian government considered a scheme to work with Kew to supply trained gardeners to be sent to different provinces in India.⁶⁰

Travel to America for work, however, was discouraged by William Wynne, foreman in Bartram's Botanic Garden, Philadelphia, unless a gardener was young and well educated. He wrote:

Some Englishmen, who might be denominated good gardeners, are too sanguine of making a rapid fortune in America: they, of course, are disappointed. There are numbers who, from an aversion to study, and from other causes, affect to despise all "book Learning" (as they call it), who by dint of plodding the same round for a number of years, manage to scrape together a scanty knowledge of the routine of forcing, nailing wall trees, cropping ground, &c. &c.: to them I would say, if you want employment as a gardener, you had better seek for it at home, at least not here...A man who can procure a good situation in Britain, if he is fond of his profession, should not come here; except he can set up in business for himself, where he can find a ready market for anything he can grow; but to the young gardener, who has studied the principles of his profession, who is not afraid of work, and who has not sufficient interest with the principal nurserymen to procure a situation worth his acceptance at home, to him I say, this is the country in which you can have plenty of employment, at wages on which you can live well.⁶¹

The editors of horticultural journals not only printed advertisements for those looking for work but also kept in their offices their own listings of those searching for new employment:

To the Nobility and Gentry in Want of Gardeners and Gardeners in want of places. A Book is opened at the Gardener's Gazette Office, where the names of Gardeners in want of places are entered free of expense and the Nobility and Gentry will have access to it between Nine and Five daily: Gardeners desirous of having their names entered must send, postage-free, directed to the Editor of the Gardener's Gazette the following particulars. Last place or places they have filled and in what capacity. Reference for general good Character. References for Practical Knowledge. Nature of the places they require, and any other particulars they may like to add, to be read by or communicated to parties in want of gardeners.⁶²

Another method of recruitment was through hearing from family or friends that a vacancy would soon be available. Career servants such as maids, butlers and footmen became 'peripatetic servants' and moved with their employers following the 'season' around the country.⁶³ Families spent time at their London house, travelled to Bath to take the waters, or moved from one grand country house to another to spend time with friends and relatives. The servants were often in a position to hear of vacancies as they arose and could sometimes put in a good word on a gardener's behalf. George Roberts, under-gardener at Erdigg in Wales, worked initially on the Great Western Railway. He moved from there to work at Cefn quarries loading trucks with sandstone. However, a recession during the 1880s meant that he became unemployed and he was taken on to work at Erdigg, despite his lack of experience, because his mother-in-law used to work on the estate.⁶⁴ James Rabbage, a deaf and dumb gardener, was cousin to, and lived with, Charlotte Seward, a laundress at Mamhead.⁶⁵

Employers too exchanged staff with their extended families, sending gardeners from one garden to another, sometimes on secondment, sometimes permanently. In Devon, the Lopes family leased Buckland Abbey from the Drakes. For a time George Giles the agent looked after the affairs at Buckland Abbey as well as at Maristow and gardeners worked in both gardens.⁶⁶

There was a strong head gardener network, sometimes because they were related. Francis Stone, head gardener to C. F. Roberts at Heavitree, was brother-in-law to Thomas Bartlett, head gardener at Knightleys in Exeter.⁶⁷ Some had trained together, which meant they kept in touch with each other through a variety of means; meeting at horticultural society exhibitions, visiting each others' gardens and communicating through letters and horticultural journals. A head gardener would often offer the services of one of their men, taking a pride in finding the best position for someone they had trained. This reflected well on the head gardener and, indirectly, on the owner of the garden. It was also a method of moving a gardener on if he was unsatisfactory, or if there had been a personality clash. This could be done through word of mouth or through advertisements for example:

Journeyman (First) in the houses. Age 23. 4 years good character. Mr Mackay Gardener, Maristow, Roborough, S Devon can confidently recommend a young man as above.⁶⁸

Family connections were important. John and William Franklin were the middle brothers in a family of eleven children. Both became gardeners instead of following the family trade of shoe-making. At age 21 William was living as a nursery gardener at Mount Radford bothy working for Veitch. By 1870 he was head gardener at Farringdon where he remained until his retirement when he moved to live at 50 Oxford Terrace, Exeter.⁶⁹

John, who was two years younger than William was listed in the 1861 census as an agricultural labourer at Teignmouth. However, ten years later he was in the 'Bachelor Cottage' at Poltimore, firstly as a foreman gardener, then as head. From there he moved, in 1879, to Streatham Hall as head gardener, taking over the position from Henry Beddard, and remained there until the early twentieth century. While working at Poltimore John Franklin had shared the bothy with Albert Ballhatchet. Ballhatchet also moved to work at Streatham Hall – he was there from 1872 to 1876 as a foreman. When he left he became head gardener for the Bishop of Exeter, first of all working in Exeter, where he would have known about the vacancy left by Beddard, then moving with his family to the Bishop's Palace in Fulham. These three head gardeners illustrate the relationship links between career gardeners, both familial and through working together.

Not only did families and head gardeners have their own network, but so too did travelling salesmen, in particular those who worked selling seeds, plants and equipment for nurseries, such as William Napper who worked for Lucombe and Pince in Exeter. Travelling all over the country, they were in a good position to know who was leaving or retiring and what vacancies were available. Nurseries and seedsmen acted as agencies and advertised the services of gardeners seeking a new position:

WANTS a SITUATION as GARDENER, a person who perfectly understands the Arts of Gardening in all its branches; has lived in a respectable family for these last seven years, from whom he can have a good character. Apply to Mr Pince, Nursery-man, Exeter, (if by letter, post-paid).⁷⁰

Nurseries kept lists of gardeners wishing to move and of people requiring gardeners and would provide work while a man was waiting for a suitable position to be found (see Chapter Six). Robert Glendinning worked a short time for James Veitch before he was recommended for the position of head gardener at Bicton in 1829. However, when he left Bicton, it was to work in partnership with Lucombe, Pince and Company until he took on his own nursery at Chiswick.⁷¹

Social Mobility

The hierarchy apparent in society was also present between servants, with a division between the gardeners of nobility and gentry and those of the mercantile and professional class. While an estate head gardener would have been on a similar level to the butler or a French cook, journeymen gardeners and garden labourers would have been at the other end of the scale, ranked with or slightly above agricultural and farm labourers. Within a garden a hierarchical structure was necessary between upper and lower gardeners, so that everyone knew their place and respect was accorded to foremen and especially to the head gardeners. As Arthur Hooper commented, 'the position one held in the hierarchy was of considerable importance'.⁷² In very large gardens such as Chatsworth where the kitchen garden was apart from the flower gardens and the pleasure gardens, ordinary gardeners would have taken their orders direct from foremen and would not have had a great deal of contact with the head gardener apart from being interviewed for a position or if in trouble.⁷³ Nursery foremen were entitled to hold the rank of head-gardener 'and to that of master-gardener ever afterwards; the same may be said of foremen to public botanic gardens, and royal or national gardens'.⁷⁴ However, not all large houses had such a hierarchical system. Merlin Waterson discusses the friendship between staff and servants, and the servant community at Erdigg in Wales, but this seems to have been unusual.⁷⁵

Social mobility was limited by the ambitions and capabilities of the individual. If a gardener was truly determined to get into a top post, then he would travel as far and as often as was necessary to achieve his aim. Many gardeners offered to pay a premium to work in a particular garden or with a particular head gardener. This could be up to half his week's pay, or a proportion of his salary; more often it was a set sum, usually £5 or £10 paid to a third party. Usually, but not always, it was paid to a nursery to help find a position, or direct to a head gardener to take on a learner.⁷⁶ For example, in 1832, an architect in Yorkshire auctioned sought after situations to the highest bidder, hoping to get at least £20 from a gardener seeking a position.⁷⁷

Three years earlier a man had bitterly complained about the greediness of a particular individual and suggested that trainees were leaving one (un-named) prestigious garden without adequate training:

I have known the gardener have no less than four apprentices at a time, who have paid him five or six pounds each, as a premium, for two years expecting to have

an opportunity in that time of obtaining a practical knowledge of the different parts of their profession; but who, at the expiration of the two years, have found themselves very much deceived, and being obliged to make room for a fresh stock of apprentices (to fill the gardener's pocket), they obtain the name of journeymen, although they have their business still to learn; and on that account they generally fail to give satisfaction to their next employer, who will give the most particular part of the work to those whom he thinks most competent to do it.⁷⁸

Although the practice of charging premiums was condemned by writers in the horticultural journals, it became a normal part of job-hunting.⁷⁹ By the end of the century many advertisers were asking for a financial incentive to place a journeyman in a prestigious garden. A job seeker might offer to pay a reward for obtaining a position. Examples include an 'Improver's position' offered at £5 per year for two years; a request for £5 for 'assisting' a gardener to find a situation as a head gardener, and a 49 year old working gardener who offered ten percent of his first year's salary for a permanent position.⁸⁰ Some offered to work for just their keep to ensure they were trained in a garden that gave them an advantage for future job-seeking; this included a 'Young Lady' who offered to 'give time and pay a small premium' in order to learn the business.⁸¹ With a sixteen year old stating that 'wages were not so much an object as gaining experience',⁸² it is no wonder that wages remained low for gardeners. A sum such as £10 offered by James Baker,⁸³ and even the smaller sums referred to above, constituted a huge investment in their future considering gardeners only earned between 10s and 15s a week.

It was acknowledged that in order to gain social status, a young gardener had to have the best education possible and payment of a premium was considered to be worthwhile to create an opportunity to move up the garden hierarchy, by training with a well-known head gardener or in a top-ranking garden. However, there was a danger that this could backfire:-

... there are others that are rather prejudiced against taking a gardener out of a first-class establishment; and they are not void of a reason for being so, as they are aware that many of the superintendents of the above places require premiums from young professionals for merely allowing them to work on the establishment, giving them a promise to assist them into a more remunerative situation. A young man's professional abilities are sometimes a secondary consideration with these wholesale dealers in gardeners...Employers are also aware that the greater part of the majority of these young men's time is employed in one particular department, consequently, they must be very often in ignorance of what is going on in many of the other departments.⁸⁴

Education of Gardeners

There were three strands to a gardener's education and training. Formal education which came from schools and colleges; practical training from an apprenticeship or working with other gardeners; and self-education. This system paralleled that offered to the farming community. Paul Brassley writes: 'almost all farm workers, and all but a small minority of farmers and landowners, received what training they had 'on the job', as part of their working routine'.⁸⁵ Boys learned by watching and doing and were given more responsibility as they grew more proficient or older. There was an assumption that most agricultural and garden labourers would remain as such and did not need further education. When the Agricultural College was established, in 1845, it, in common with later horticultural colleges such as Studley and Swanley, catered for mostly middle class students.⁸⁶ It was not until technical education had been introduced in the 1890s that there was a mixture of practical and theoretical education aimed at the working gardener. Increasing numbers of horticultural and agricultural books and journals catered to the need for self-education.

Education had a high profile in the nineteenth century, part of the Victorian ideal of learning for learning's sake. However, Alec Ellis suggests that for the majority of working class children the average length of school life was no more than two years until after the Education Act of 1870.⁸⁷ Loudon had worried in 1827 that, 'as things at present stand, very few parents who bring up their children to gardening are able to bestow on them the requisite elementary education'.⁸⁸ This meant many gardeners in the nineteenth century began work with the minimum of formal schooling. Sunday schools had been available to working class children from the end of the eighteenth century, but for many this was the only formal teaching they had before going to work. Literacy was the main theme of these classes and most youngsters entering work with the aim of becoming a head gardener would have acquired very basic reading and writing skills. Of fifty-six gardeners and nurserymen, aged between fifteen and sixty-six, brought before the quarter sessions in Exeter between 1851 and 1881, seven men could read well; forty-one could read 'Imperfectly', only eight could not read at all. This suggests that the majority of gardeners would have picked up basic literacy skills.⁸⁹

The National Society and the British Foreign Schools Society were set up to educate working class children in the 1830s. These, like the earlier dame schools and later the

‘council schools’, were available for those who could afford to educate their children. They taught a wider range of skills, but even at a cost of 1d or 2d a week, many could not afford to pay for their children to be educated, or to lose out on a child’s wage. It was not until 1891 that education was free to all at an elementary level.

There were also schools set up specifically to train youngsters for a future career. Most were charitable institutions serving a specific purpose, for example the West of England Institution for the instruction of the Deaf and Dumb Children of Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset founded in 1826. Here, in addition to academic subjects, girls were trained in needlework and knitting; boys were taught tailoring, shoemaking, printing and gardening.⁹⁰ Other institutions included industrial and reformatory schools. The Devon and Exeter Reformatory School for Boys at Brampford Speke was established in 1855 for the purpose of ‘reclaiming criminals’.⁹¹ Youngsters aged between 11 and 17 were taught farm and kitchen garden work by a ‘labour master’ as part of their rehabilitation.⁹²

At Exminster, the Devon and Exeter Boys Industrial School should have been in a position to produce educated garden boys from its pupils. Founded in 1863 to ‘reclaim those who have been brought up in vice, or whose circumstances would most probably lead them to crime,’ the school moved to Exminster in 1869 where a larger number of pupils could be housed and where there was land for gardening.⁹³ A report of that date suggested the institution was necessary because boys were ‘thrown about the streets’ as they had been deprived of ‘all the playgrounds they were accustomed to have’. The establishment of Northernhay, Southernhay, the Bonhay, and Bury Meadow parks as ‘most genteel places’, had excluded them as playgrounds for children.⁹⁴ Boys remained at the school for a period of one month to four years. They were aged between 7 and 14 and taught ‘Reading, Spelling, Writing and Ciphering, and as far as practicable the elements of History, Geography, Social Economy and Drawing’ for three hours a day. There was also religious instruction and industrial education ‘for not less than six hours daily’, which encompassed tailoring, shoemaking, and practical gardening. The income from the garden produce sold was sufficient to pay the gardener’s wages. Approximately half the boys were trained as gardeners. At the end of their stay in the school the boys were kitted out with a set of clothes and ‘placed, as far as practicable, in some employment or service’.⁹⁵ It is not known how many became gardeners once they left the institution, but the *Exeter Flying Post* carried an advertisement which read:

‘Wanted to Place a Boy, an orphan. Apprentice to a Gardener. Apply Superintendent. Industrial School, Exminster’.⁹⁶ It appears that if the boys were without parents to help them get work then the institution would do its best.

Workhouses too saw the benefit in training boys for a future career. For example, the Board of Guardians of the Union Workhouse at Newton Abbot employed ‘a competent person’ who taught boys ‘the modern system of Spade Husbandry’.⁹⁷ This knowledge would have enabled boys to tend a garden or an allotment if the opportunity arose, as well as fitting them with the skills to become a garden labourer in one of the nursery or market gardens which surrounded Exeter.

Towards the end of the century farm schools began to be set up where boys, usually the sons of agricultural labourers and small farmers, were offered scholarships to learn farming and gardening. The Farm School for Bedfordshire, sponsored by the Duke of Bedford, had twenty pupils whose education, board and residence was paid for by Bedfordshire County Council.⁹⁸ As Brassley notes, there were worries about educating labourers’ children; concerns were expressed that educated boys might look for jobs away from the land, having the opposite effect of that intended by the schools.⁹⁹ These establishments had been set up as part of the back to the land movement, trying to repopulate rural areas with small farmers and gardeners. This initiative also saw the establishment of several horticultural colleges to train, mostly middle class, people for a career in horticulture.

It was not just college students who had the opportunity to take formal examinations. From 1892, ‘for a fee of 3s payable in advance’, anyone interested in gardening was able to undertake the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) examination.¹⁰⁰ In 1894, 126 candidates including a schoolmaster, a chemist, a warehouseman and a railway clerk, took the examination, eleven passing with first class marks, thirty-seven classed as second class and forty-five third class. Thirty-three were unclassified. Of those that came into one or other of the three categories above, at least fifty were gardeners aged from sixteen (G. R. Newman an improver at Sutton House, Gloucester) to forty-six (John Baxter of Pine Grove in Dundee).¹⁰¹ There were six gardeners from Dundee, not all from the same garden, which suggests they met and agreed to study together for the examinations. Members of The Court of the Worshipful Company of Gardeners and also the RHS offered scholarships to the most successful candidates aged between

eighteen and twenty-two. Worth £25 a year, these covered one year of fees to be trained at Kew, followed by a further year of training in an approved, prestigious establishment of the student's own choosing either in Britain or abroad.¹⁰²

In order to demonstrate their theoretical knowledge and understanding and practical skills, the examinees were required to answer a total of eight questions, four each from two sections. The first section on 'Elementary Principles' covered the theory of gardening and botanic knowledge. Questions were asked about plant growth, soil and fertilisation of plants. The second section was based upon practical knowledge and experience. Entitled 'Horticultural Practice', questions were asked about where plants should be placed for best effect, how the ground should be prepared and questions of succession of vegetables. Some of the questions seemed quite subjective and open to a range of interpretations which could have affected the possible 300 marks given. Question 14 asked the candidate to 'Mention the time of planting, and indicate the general method of culture suitable for the flower-garden'. It is unknown whether the examiners who marked the papers would have made allowances for later seasons in Scotland than in the south of England, or for the individual ideas of head gardeners that were passed on to their trainees.

The number of candidates rose each year, as did the number achieving a first class pass, but from 1895 ages and occupations were not included on the lists of successful candidates, so unless the address is for a specific garden, it is difficult to identify working gardeners. Some gardeners took the examinations several times as did R. Bellarby of Askham Grange Gardens, York, and Alfred Morris, Barrowmore Hall Gardens, Chester. It was possible to take the examinations several years apart. George Stuart took exams in 1894 and in 1897. Several major gardens supported the examinations including Castle Ashby in Northampton, Cambridge Botanical Gardens, Barkby Hall in Leicester and Castle Howard in Yorkshire.

As the years progressed the examiners began to comment on the candidates' performance. In 1895 they praised the training received by increasing numbers of students from horticultural colleges such as Swanley and the Central Laboratory at Chelmsford. 'Considering the opportunities at the disposal of the candidates, the results may be considered satisfactory. The effect of continuous systematic training is well exemplified in the class lists'.¹⁰³ In 1896 practical skills were criticised: 'if hands are

trained to work, the eyes are not correspondingly taught how and what to see'.¹⁰⁴ The following year there was 'a very considerable improvement upon the results of that [examination] held in 1896...the "Practical Horticulture" showed, as might be anticipated, a slight superiority over the "Elementary Principles"'.¹⁰⁵

By 1901 there were at least six technical and horticultural colleges nationally offering two year horticultural courses with the opportunity to take the RHS examination in horticulture. However, as more candidates were coming from colleges, the practical side of the examination was causing real concern:

Some candidates had full knowledge of the Elementary Principles, but failed altogether when they came to the Practice. Candidates would do well to remember that a gardener may rise high in his profession with little or no knowledge of the composition of plants or trees, and may never have heard of Phloëm or Xylem; but cannot possibly do so unless he knows – when and how to repot choice plants; the rotation of crops in the kitchen garden; the best kind of fruit trees to plant and the right time to plant them, and so on.¹⁰⁶

This echoed a fear expressed by Professor Huxley in an article written for *The Garden* six months before the first examinations. He had maintained that study of chemistry, botany and physiology were a waste of time. '...science is only organised common sense, and sound practice is science'. He was very scathing about the 'technology of horticulture' and against too much 'book learning'.¹⁰⁷ But it was only six months later that *The Garden* was praising the first candidates to have taken the examination in gardening following a series of lectures organised by the Technical Education Committee of the Surrey County Council.¹⁰⁸

Practical Education

Practical education began for many gardeners by working with their parents. There are thirty-four youngsters aged six to eleven on the database who were employed in gardens, eighteen of whom were working with their father and two with their grandfather. Even top head gardeners began work as weeders and errand boys who helped with fruit picking and bird scaring. James Barnes wrote about how he hated picking caterpillars off bushes when he helped his father.¹⁰⁹ When they were old enough, boys were employed in their own right. For the younger gardener, training took up a large part of his time: 'pot-washing, soil-sieving, greenhouse-washing and general chores, at the same time learning how to handle plants'.¹¹⁰

Powers of attention and concentration were considered by Loudon to be essential skills which had to be honed by the apprentice gardener. He maintained:

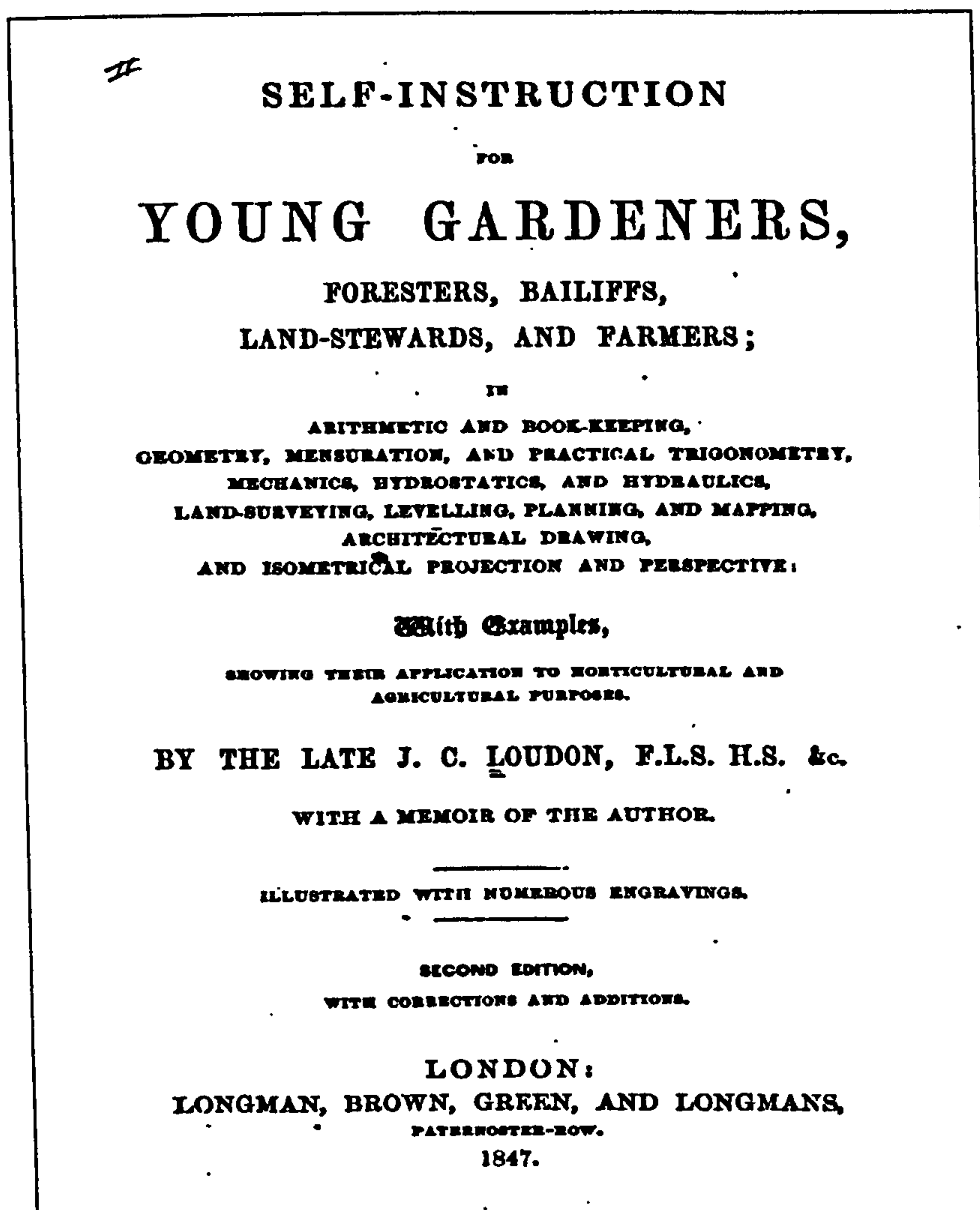
Unless we pay attention to what is addressed to us, whether by the eye or the ear, it is impossible we can remember, because the sight or sound has made no impression on the memory, and without memory, there can be no knowledge.¹¹¹

‘The labour of a gardener,’ he said, ‘is not severe and time he has for self-improvement is very considerable, (as much or more than for those students who are studying at University)’.¹¹² The plan of study he devised was for every gardener under thirty to rise at five o’clock to have an hour of study at a different language every morning, it was suggested these should include Latin, English grammar, Greek, French, German and Italian. He did not expect gardeners to be proficient in speaking all these languages, but at least to be able to read them, and maintained that ‘even a word per day gained is worth something’.¹¹³

Loudon recommended two hours should be spent every evening learning a variety of skills which included architectural, botanical, figure and landscape drawing, arithmetic and land surveying, botany, mechanics and experimental philosophy. This was only the beginning, for in addition to all the skills above he suggested that trainees should also aim for personal accomplishments; learning to dance, fence, box and wrestle and how to play backgammon, chess, the flute and the fiddle. Swimming and horsemanship should not be neglected, if the opportunity was offered. Conversation and debating skills should be practised whenever possible.¹¹⁴

Loudon maintained in 1827, ‘that a library of books ought to form a part of the furniture of every garden....a gardener can no more acquire his profession without books than he can without tools’.¹¹⁵ The principal reason, he wrote, was that there had been so many scientific advances that ‘gardening is now quite a different thing to what it was twenty years ago’. The library he recommended was to include twelve classes of books which encompassed languages, English grammar and composition, memory, geography and history, moral and practical Science in addition to professional books and periodicals.¹¹⁶ The last section, of course, included *The Gardener’s Magazine* which Loudon saw, ‘as a means of the improvement of gardeners’.¹¹⁷ Loudon never stopped working to encourage youngsters to be more educated and dedicated a whole book to the training of young gardeners which was published posthumously by his wife (see Figure 2:8).¹¹⁸

Figure 2:8. Title page of Loudon's *Self-Instruction for Young Gardeners*



Self-improvement became a social and moral duty incumbent on all, and leading writers considered that gardeners should be among those to take advantage of opportunities arising:

The labourer must perfect himself by years of patient application in the peculiar department of work in which he hopes to excel...the professional man must study and work hard to obtain a knowledge of his business. The success or failure of these men affects themselves only.¹¹⁹

There was also a fear that if a gardener was not educated then he would be unable to progress in his career or would find himself having to change occupation. Reading was considered of paramount importance. James Housman advocated studying:

...the many publications on botany, horticulture, chemistry &c....I believe the day is near at hand when something more will be required of the practical gardener than a knowledge of sowing, planting, pruning, and mowing, wrapping himself up in a blue apron, and carrying a crooked knife.¹²⁰

Up-to-date journals such as *The Gardener* and *The Gardener's Chronicle* which were essential to the men for their studies were not available to all, despite their relative cheapness (the *Journal of Horticulture* was published weekly at 3d and the *Gardener's Chronicle* at 5d). In 1890 G. H. suggested:

in myriads of gardens where two or more young men are housed in rooms or bothies, the employers would render them exceeding service if they would furnish them with a fresh copy of the gardening papers weekly...the pay of young men is not so much that they can afford to provide themselves with much literature, although generally, they do their best.¹²¹

Some gardeners felt threatened by the availability of gardening education. The numbers and popularity of journals especially worried Robert Fish as he believed that they were spreading knowledge not only to gardeners, but also to garden owners and therefore threatening the gardener's authority:

In visiting the villa of the merchant, or the country house of the gentleman, and observing upon the tables of the library several of the gardening periodicals, one cannot resist the conviction, not only that the knowledge of our art is rapidly extending, but also that, if we keep not pace with the onward movement, or, rather, be not competent to give that movement direction, no inattention or carelessness of ours will impede the march of improvement. Men of all classes will become their own gardeners; and the professors of gardening, instead of being distinguished for the confidence reposed in them, and the mental acquirements of which they were once the possessors, will be degraded to the condition of mere delvers of the soil, and neither possess that respectability, nor receive that remuneration, which they have hitherto done.¹²²

The threat to the gardeners' position as a possessor of specific skills made it all the more important for gardeners to keep themselves as highly educated as possible.

Some of the larger estates provided a teacher one or two nights a week to teach botany, technical drawing and Latin.¹²³ Many bothies contained libraries of current journals and gardening books, or the men were encouraged to attend lectures at local institutes and take advantage of local reading rooms. Gardeners from Escot were able to attend lectures paid for by the estate.¹²⁴ Improvers, journeymen, head gardeners and nursery gardeners formed their own groups such as the Devon and Exeter Gardeners' Mutual Improvement Association:

Formation of the Association in 1891 was the outcome of a feeling among some of the leading gardeners in the district, that, with the demand for technical education which had sprung up and spread all over the country, something should be done in this neighbourhood to raise the standard of gardening and keep it abreast of the times.¹²⁵

Patrons of the Association were some of the largest landowners in the county. The President was W. Lethbridge of Courtlands in Lymptone. Meetings were held every fortnight during the winter in Exeter Guildhall with papers read by head gardeners, amateurs and nurserymen. Here Mr Luxton, an improver in the employ of the Exeter Nursery Company, Mr Johns, gardener at Mr Veitch's nursery and Mr Robert Hill of Pinhoe listened to papers on, 'The Carnations and Picotee', or 'Chrysanthemums' and items on 'Foliage Plants and Their Culture' or 'A Chat on Indoor Cultivated Plants'.¹²⁶

The aim of the Association was to:

...foster and promote the acquirement of knowledge in the grand old profession of gardening, and to maintain the time-honoured prestige of Devon as a pioneer in the field of horticultural achievement.¹²⁷

Each summer the Association visited local gardens in the neighbourhood where they were shown around by head gardeners. In July 1895 they visited, in turn, Poltimore, Bradfield and Knightshayes. Here they admired avenues, toured glasshouses and enjoyed two luncheons and a substantial tea.¹²⁸ Other associations were formed in the county where there were sufficient gardeners to support the meetings. For example there was a District Gardeners' Mutual Improvement Society at Axminster and another at Teignmouth.¹²⁹ These associations followed the ideas of organisations such as the Devon and Exeter Botanical and Horticultural Society who had instituted winter evening meetings as early as 1867 for the purpose of 'affording valuable information to those who were interested in either the practice or study of Horticulture'.¹³⁰

For those who could not get to a Gardeners' Association there was the local Mechanics' Institute. From the 1820s these organisations had encouraged discussion of new scientific and technological ideas. Meetings during the evening covered a wide range of topics from technical instruction to moral and political education.¹³¹ This led eventually to the movement for technical training which saw St Thomas District Committee for Technical Education putting on classes at Topsham, Exmouth and Upton Pyne where it was possible to study fruit culture, horticulture and gardening.¹³² These courses were aimed not just at private gardeners, but were also for those who worked in nurseries and market gardens in and around Exeter.

Skills were needed to communicate with professional colleagues, both in this country and abroad. Hence Lucombe and Pince employed language teacher Arthur Persac at St

Thomas in 1861.¹³³ Loudon and his later colleagues were aware that the new breed of head gardeners needed to be educated, but also experienced, not just in the physical work of gardening in all its variety, but in the management of a garden staff. It was essential that gardeners were able to share knowledge with their peers, to interact with a variety of garden owners and visitors and to get the best from their workforce. Thomas Mawson, for example, not only chose in which nurseries to work according to his interests, but also recognized the need to be able to talk to gentlemen on an equal footing, be they owners, visitors or customers. So he joined the village debating society to gain confidence and learned to dress well, saying that appearance was all important when talking to garden owners.¹³⁴

Apprentices

To most an apprenticeship would appear to be the most important element of a gardener's education. As stated above many youngsters began working with relatives while very young. A boy who aspired to be a head gardener would first have had to become a garden apprentice or 'improver'. An apprenticeship would have lasted for a minimum of three years, more if begun at fifteen or earlier, and continued until he was aged twenty-one.¹³⁵ He would have served under a master gardener, either living and working from home, or supplied with food and lodgings and, from the 1830s, would have needed to have had some basic education in reading, writing and arithmetic. The three characteristics needed to become a head gardener were the ability to educate himself and make full use of any training given, the capacity for hard, physical work, and a strong determination to succeed.

Young gardeners recorded in the census were rarely listed as apprentices. They were called 'garden boy',¹³⁶ 'labourers', 'gardener's assistant', 'under gardeners' or, most frequently, just 'gardeners'. Edward Ankings of Rattery was listed as 'attendant to gardener' and George Petrock, aged 13, as 'gardener's errand boy'. Of 3,018 gardeners under 21 only four per cent were recorded as apprentices, but this does not mean that only four per cent went on to become career gardeners.¹³⁷ What it does show is how difficult it is to generalise from descriptions in the census. Where a person was listed as under gardener, assistant or apprentice, it implies that there was at least one other man working in the garden in a position of authority. However, some youths under 21, especially the older ones, may have been the only gardener. The title 'apprentice' or

‘learning gardener’ implies that boys were being trained: that of ‘first’, ‘second’ or ‘under gardener’ that there was a definite hierarchy within the garden.

Whatever their title, apprentices learned first by example and by helping other gardeners. A learner would initially be assigned many menial tasks such as soil sieving, pot-washing, and greenhouse cleaning, at the same time learning the importance of cleanliness. Tasks would vary depending upon which garden department he began working in. If placed in the glasshouse range he would have been responsible for carrying coals and keeping the boilers stoked. An important task would have been to keep the ventilators adjusted in the houses to maintain a consistent temperature. As he undertook these routine tasks he would have learned about the requirements of different plants for heat, water and food, and how to deal with pests and diseases. If placed outdoors, he would be taught how to recognise weeds, the importance of manure, how to construct a hot-bed and the correct times of planting. All apprentices were required to help wherever an extra pair of hands was needed. As their skills and knowledge improved, they would be set to work with gardeners in each of the different garden departments and would be expected, ‘to learn the names of things; their uses in gardening; how to use them in the best manner singly; and how to combine their use in performing the different operations of gardening’.¹³⁸

Richard Littlejohn at Endsleigh assisted with the bedding out in May 1897, helped shade the greenhouse roofs in June and, at other times, cleaned paths and sheds. He helped bring in the orange trees in September and cleaned pumps, boilers and greenhouses in winter. In February 1898 he ‘stoned’ soil to prepare it for potting, and in June he was set to clip old flower heads from rhododendrons and to peg down plants to enable them to root and form new off-shoots. He was also required to ‘assist as necessary’ on a daily basis, helping in the greenhouse, the frame yard, the rock garden, clearing scum off the pond, sorting begonias for storage, and in doing so managed to spend time in most of the garden areas. For this work he was paid one shilling a day when the normal daily wage of the other gardeners was 2s 6d. The only place where he did not work was the kitchen garden.¹³⁹

Loudon was specific about where an apprenticeship should be held:

No one can ever expect to attain to the rank either of master gardener or tradesman who has not served an apprenticeship to the one or the other. In

general it is preferable to apprentice youths to master gardeners, as there the labor is less than in tradesmen's gardens, and the opportunities of instruction generally much greater.¹⁴⁰

He maintained that as the majority of apprentice gardeners were destined to become, 'serving-gardeners to private families' that they should begin their training in private gardens, but if they were intent on owning or managing a commercial concern then that is where training should begin.¹⁴¹

Conditions of apprenticeship varied: often a premium was paid to the head gardener and the apprentice would receive in return bed and board and very little money.¹⁴² Sometimes the premium was as much as ten guineas, but the apprentice could then be paid five shillings a week for the first year, rising to seven shillings in the third year. Many apprentices were sent to night-school or expected to educate themselves. Paying a premium and undertaking self-education did not guarantee a job; an apprentice having served his time, could still be turned away without a position.

Some apprentices succeeded in finding work. Of those listed on the database 125 remained as gardeners, one as a jobbing gardener, two became landscape gardeners, eight became nurserymen and twenty-six became market gardeners and William Salter became a foreman at Bicton. Three remained as garden labourers. Not all stayed gardening; Ernest Allen of Plymouth became a timber yard labourer and Elias Sercombe of Cornwood, a railway booking clerk.¹⁴³

Journeyman

Having served an apprenticeship the majority of men opted to move from one garden to another to gain experience in different areas of the garden. Before they could become head gardeners it was necessary to gain experience in every garden department possible. It was also preferred that at least one year should have been spent working in a commercial enterprise such as a nursery, botanic or market garden.

Independent learning and experience were just as important to a career gardener as his apprenticeship. Loudon implies that a journeyman (so named, not because he travelled, but because he was paid by the day), would usually be aged under 30.¹⁴⁴ However of the seventy-three journeymen listed in the Devon database, the youngest, George Toll

of Heavitree was aged 14 and the oldest, Thomas Hollwell of Exeter St Mary was 78, which suggests that, in many cases, this was a catch-all term for those who were employed on a daily, or a weekly, basis as well as young career gardeners.¹⁴⁵

A trainee gardener would have needed, as indicated above, to travel from one establishment to another, or from department to department if the garden was large enough. He would have aimed to work in the grandest gardens, not only because of the prestige that went with the position, but also because certain head gardeners had reputations for their teaching skills which could guarantee a future position in a good garden when they moved on. For example, gardeners trained by James Barnes at Bicton were in demand and went on to work at Chatsworth and Saltram and other top gardens.

Before attaining the position of head gardener, it was usual for gardeners to have worked as a foreman. Only forty-four have been identified to date, aged between 21 and 56, half of which were foremen in nurseries. The private gardeners were mostly in their twenties, three in their thirties and two in their forties. The nurserymen tended to be older. Only three were in their twenties, with the majority in their thirties, three in their forties and three in their fifties. This was because a foreman in a nursery was solely in charge of a particular department, or acted as a manager for the owner. John Wooster, known as a foreman, was a commercial traveller for Veitch and William Johnson was 'Foreman' at Fullers Nursery in Newton Abbot for 52 years, earning himself a RHS Associate of Honour medal in 1930.¹⁴⁶

Men who took on the role of a foreman are often hard to trace through the records. In the census it was rare for a man to be listed as a foreman, unless he was working for a nursery. From estate records the main indication that a man was acting as a foreman was usually that he was paid a little more than other garden workers, but not as much as the head gardener. For example in 1854 Robert Scoble at Kitley was paid 3d per day more than his fellow workers, at Streatham Hall the foreman was paid 3s 4d per day when the other gardeners were paid 3s per day, and at Endsleigh, Walter Friese was paid 3s a day, 6d more than the other gardeners.¹⁴⁷ A foreman might have been the one sent on errands, to obtain plants from another garden for example, or allowed to visit an exhibition with the head gardener. Conversely, it was usually the foreman who was left in charge whenever the head gardener was away.¹⁴⁸

The garden foreman acted as a middleman between the head gardener and the staff. He assumed a great deal of influence. 'It was not for them to hire or fire, but should anyone step out of line or fail to do as he was told, a word from the foreman to the Head could mean trouble for the person concerned'.¹⁴⁹ Henry Armson was discharged by Paxton at Chatsworth, 'for disobeying the foremans orders.'¹⁵⁰ They did, after all, have to protect their own position. One foreman found, to motivate his men, 'I can get more work and better done by a word of encouragement than by a week's grumbling'.¹⁵¹

In a large garden the position of foreman was usually allocated according to the length of service with a strict order determining who would be in line for promotion. It was an invidious position as when in charge of the whole garden a man acquired a certain authority for that time, but returned to a subservient position afterwards. In an ideal situation, foremen who shared a bothy with other journeymen gardeners often had their own room or even an office where they could keep a physical, as well as a hierarchical distance, from the rest of their companions.¹⁵²

It was rare, though not unheard of, that a foreman was promoted from within a garden unless it was a large one with several different departments. This was because it was felt that it would be difficult to give orders and to discipline those with whom he had been working side by side as equals, and likewise for the men to give him due respect. Head gardeners preferred to appoint from another garden or to encourage a journeyman ready for promotion to move to a different garden, even when he had been acting as foreman.

The Aged Gardener

Nowhere is the status, or lack of it, of the gardener more apparent than in old age. There are 1,248 gardeners listed on the database who lived to be 70 or over, many of them still working. Two hundred of these were 80 or over and ten were aged between 90 and 95. Some gardeners worked until they died in service. This could cause problems for their widows and family, especially if they were living in a tied cottage. When William Kerslake died at Maristow, his wife Grace was forced to quit the gardener's house, although she was paid for 'articles left by her in the garden house'.¹⁵³ At Escot too, the family had to move when James Towel died in 1862, despite his son John working on the estate as a gardener's boy.¹⁵⁴ However, some older gardeners were partially supported by an estate and could work reduced hours, or they were allowed to remain in

estate cottages to be called upon in times of need. Former head gardeners were often paid a pension. These included John Eames at Powderham.¹⁵⁵

If young gardeners were required to move frequently, it was the opposite for middle-aged men who were expected to be more settled. That age was a factor is evidenced by how often it is mentioned in advertisements. There was a reluctance to hire older men, making movement to a better job more difficult. A London nurseryman Samuel Badman commented in 1872:

There is a growing disposition on the part of employers to hire only young men, because they are strong and active; thus the man who is unfortunate enough to be on the wrong side of fifty finds it a difficult matter to obtain a good situation, and is more often than not compelled to seek employment in a nursery, or to run the chance of any stray job that may turn up.¹⁵⁶

Older gardeners were considered more likely to become set in their ways and less likely to be aware of new methods and introductions, using methods which were old-fashioned, or resistant to change. 'Gardeners too commonly are not sufficiently anxious to keep themselves up with the times, either as regards their intelligence, their manners or their production'.¹⁵⁷ These men, especially those without families, could look for a position 'in the house'. William Dover of Plymouth and Robert Thompson at North Tawton were live-in servants.¹⁵⁸ Here they would have been housed and fed and would have kept the garden in order, sometimes with help, sometimes on their own. Widowed gardeners such as William Cox at Poltimore and John Moore at Highweek frequently lived with family, sometimes with an active role working with sons or sons-in-law, sometimes simply to be cared for.¹⁵⁹ Many older gardeners, even those who had been successful head gardeners, turned to become jobbing gardeners, which was hard work, uncertain at best and poorly paid.¹⁶⁰ Richard Passmore, an unmarried gardener, was living in one room when he died at Exeter in 1890.¹⁶¹

However, for head gardeners there was an element of stability in being settled. Time spent in one garden gave an opportunity to follow their particular interests, to specialise in plant breeding, to write books or articles, to compete at local horticultural shows or to take on trainees (see Chapter Four). Thrifty gardeners like Thomas Dowell at Powderham and Richard Willis at Mamhead purchased an annuity which guaranteed them an income upon retirement.¹⁶² Long serving gardeners were sometimes given an 'annuity of superannuation' such as the £26 payable in weekly instalments to John

Stuckey, aged 63, who had been head gardener at the county lunatic asylum at Exminster for thirty-one years.¹⁶³

Several gardeners ended their lives in almshouses. In 1881 four gardeners were living in Greenway Garden Almshouses in Tiverton, filling one quarter of the male residences.¹⁶⁴ These were Thomas Boyce, aged 80, still there in 1891, William Cude, aged 85, who had been there in 1861, Nicholas Reed, aged 73, and John Sanders, aged 80. Other inmates included a retired brewer, carpenter and wheelwright, two shoemakers and two former masons. At Exeter St David, the Attwells Almshouses also held a high proportion of gardeners, three out of twenty four dwellings. In 1851 John Raltenbury was living in one of these dwellings and Mary Farnham, a gardener's widow, in another. Also in Exeter were the Wynards Almshouses in Holy Trinity and the Northernhay Almshouses, both with two former gardeners each. All these areas had a high concentration of market and private gardeners. It is not known whether any rent was payable in these houses, but a note against the entry for Northernhay states 'All living on charity in Almshouse', so it is assumed that these at least, were rent free.¹⁶⁵ George Sclater, William Payne and George Lewis, inhabitants of Attwells Almshouses in 1881, were all 'non-domestic' gardeners. The only two confirmed private gardeners in almshouses found to date were William Furse who lived in the Underwinnard Almshouses at Pilton in 1891, and William Bicknell in St Sidwell's parish, Exeter. At the women's almshouses in Northam, Grace Sanders and Grace Lewis were residents in 1851 and 1861 respectively. Sanders was 86 and described her occupation as 'working in the garden', whereas Lewis was a 'garden weeder'.¹⁶⁶ Whether these were their previous occupations or work that they were doing while in the almshouse is not known.

The very poorest gardeners, or those with physical or mental impairments, were forced to live in the workhouse. In 1851 there were fourteen gardeners, aged between 44 and 87, in workhouses in Newton Abbot, Kingsbridge, Stoke Damerel, Barnstaple, Tiverton, Bideford, Plymouth, Crediton and Exeter. The largest number, four, were in Newton Abbot and three were in Exeter. Two were unmarried, six married and six widowed. By 1881, reflecting the increase in the number of gardeners, the figures for those in workhouses had almost doubled to twenty-six gardeners in eleven workhouses.¹⁶⁷ Ten were in their seventies and the oldest, William Horne in Holsworthy Union workhouse was 95. The numbers are too few to suggest any pattern, although by 1881 the majority of inmates were either unmarried or widowed, with only four being married, which

suggests that older married gardeners were either self-sufficient or being cared for elsewhere, by their children for example.

If a gardener was unsuccessful, he would continue to work for as long as he was able. In arguing for a 'Gardeners' Benefit Society', one man, 'a gardener', explained the necessity of having a society to help care for the elderly gardener:

There is no class of men so ill provided for in their old days as gardeners. The reason is obvious; in their youthful days they are generally a wandering race, and seldom think of joining benefit societies till they are too old to be admitted.¹⁶⁸

There were benefit societies to which a gardener could belong. These included the United Gardeners' Benevolent Society, based at Waterloo Arms, Camberwell in Surrey. Established in 1839 it incorporated sick pay, life insurance and pension, for contributions of 2s 3d per month, but only for gardeners under 35 years of age.¹⁶⁹ The United Horticultural Benefit and Provident Society was a self-help society, and the Gardeners' Orphan Fund, with a subscription of 5s per year, provided for fatherless children.¹⁷⁰ The subscription to the Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Institution was one guinea a year for a minimum of fifteen years or £10.10s paid up front. A gardener would be placed on the pension list if of good character and incapacitated from work. Provided he had paid sufficient subscriptions, he could receive £20 a year for life. There was also some provision made for aged and destitute gardeners. Benefits for sickness and permanent disability from work was 10s a week for year one, 7s per week for year two and 3s per week thereafter.¹⁷¹ In 1893, the Treasurer Mr. H. J. Veitch expressed a concern that there were a large number of pensioners over 80 years of age. There were two aged 87, one 88 and another at 89. Two members had been pensioners for twenty-one years.¹⁷² This longevity of retired gardeners put a strain on pension reserves, despite the amount paid being insufficient to live on.

Summary

Gardeners moved more frequently than many other professions because it was a necessary part of their career path to gain as wide and varied experience as possible. Not all gardeners moved from choice, John Cameron in 1827 complained bitterly about owners who changed their gardeners every three or four months. Ultimately he thought this would lead to the destruction of the garden as 'every new gardener must make a

change' and he advocated owners 'to keep their gardeners for a minimum of four or five years'.¹⁷³

Self education was as important as gaining knowledge of practical skills. A man who could read, write and dress well would progress up the hierarchy much faster than one who was content just to work in a garden. There were possibilities for promotion even for those of the labouring class:

There are a number of men who, beginning as boys attendant on the foreman in charge of some piece of park or garden construction, have developed a special aptitude and love for the work, and have, through sheer grit and determination, educated themselves to the position of "landscape foreman" (as the post is termed, for lack of a better name), capable of appreciating and translating into actuality the best traditions of my practice.¹⁷⁴

Those with determination, skill and social graces eventually found a rewarding position where they would have respect and be called 'Mr' by staff and owners. Here they could settle until retirement, or move to become a proprietor of a market garden or nursery of their own. Loudon reiterated as early as 1832:

The young and scientific have nothing to fear; every year their value will be better and better understood; but the young, whose education has been neglected, and the grown-up gardener, who belongs to what may be called the old school, may henceforth both lay their account with falling rather than rising in the world.¹⁷⁵

For those who did not reach the top of their profession, or who were unable to maintain a successful position, there was little option but to return to being a garden labourer, jobbing gardener or part-time worker as their physical skills deteriorated. It was possible to move permanently up the social scale, or to move up and back down again over a lifetime.

Young gardeners who invested their money in advertisements, in paying premiums to gain a position or for training and in payment of examination fees, had a degree of success and it was possible for those with sufficient ambition and strength of will to go from humble beginnings to rise to become head gardeners or nurserymen, but in order to do so, movement was inevitable. The gardener who remained on the same estate in the same job for the whole of his career as did Ted Humphris at Aynho, Northamptonshire and John Prince who worked for the Strode family at Newnham Park, Devon, was unusual. In the latter case the whole family worked on the estate. One of

John's brothers was a gamekeeper, another a labourer and his father had also been a gamekeeper.¹⁷⁶

Thomas Bartlett head gardener for Lady Duckworth of Knightleys in Exeter, member of The Devon and Exeter Gardeners' Mutual Improvement Association summed up the importance of ambition for gardeners who hoped to succeed in their profession when he wrote:

'I hope our young members are ambitious; a man cannot get on unless he is. Have an ideal and a high one; try to shoot beyond the mark. You may not reach your ideal, but you'll be the better for trying',

and, on a more practical note, 'Don't drink, don't chew, don't smoke, don't swear, don't deceive, don't read novels. Be in earnest, be self-reliant, be generous, ... be civil, be a gentleman'.¹⁷⁷

¹ J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London, 1822), 1199.

² Thomas Allwood, James Pudner, James Taylor and George Bedford were just a few who began their working lives as farm servants. George Glandfield and Walter Hutchings, aged 9 and 10, were 'Apprentice gardeners'.

³ John Burnett (ed.), *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s* 2nd edn (London, 1994), xvii.

⁴ Ian D. Whyte, *Migration and Society in Britain 1550-1830* (Basingstoke, 2000), 1, 4.

⁵ Michael Drake, 'Aspects of Domestic Service in Great Britain and Ireland, 1841-1911', *Family and Community History*, 2:2 (1999), 119-128, 122; Whyte, *Migration*, 40.

⁶ Jessica Gerard, *Country House Life: Family and Servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994), 162, 174.

⁷ Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Ireland, 'On High Seas', South Africa, Scotland, Switzerland, USA, Wales.

⁸ Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Jersey, Cornwall, Cumberland, Derby, Dorset, Durham, Essex, Guernsey, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Isle of Man, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Middlesex, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, Oxford, Rutland, Shropshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Worcestershire and Yorkshire.

⁹ Gerard, *Country House Life*, 179.

¹⁰ 'Wanted Under Gardener (Scotch preferred) experienced in the cultivation of Fruit', was a typical advertisement placed by E.C. of Crediton in the *Devon Weekly Times (DWT)* 7.06.1872, 4a; *Gardener's Magazine (GM)* 16 (1840), 245; *Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Proceedings at the General, Quarterly, and Annual Meetings 1849 and 1850* (Taunton and London, 1851), 15.

¹¹ Filleigh Baptisms 1838-1875, 40, 44, 47, 52 and Filleigh Burials 1838-99, 26-28 transcribed by David Ryall. Available from <http://genuki.cs.ncl.ac.uk/DEV/Filleigh> [Accessed 15 September 1998].

¹² See, for example, *The Garden* 28.06.1890, 609 and 30.11.1895, 427.

¹³ *The Garden* 20.07.1895, 52.

¹⁴ *The Garden History Society News* 77 (2006), 18.

¹⁵ The enumerators' return for Baildon shows that his two oldest sons were born in the parish of Whimple, which confirms his presence in Devon.

¹⁶ *Census Enumerators' Returns (Census)*, Public Record Office (PRO) RG10-12 1871-1891; Devon Record Office (DRO) Z19/20/36; *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire* (London, 1883).

¹⁷ Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Cornwall, Dorset, Essex, Glamorgan, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire, London, Middlesex, Shropshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Sussex, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, and Yorkshire.

- ¹⁸ See Frederick Excell, Kent, Richard Gardener, Warwickshire, Sydney Day, Oxford, for example.
- ¹⁹ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1199-2000.
- ²⁰ *EFP* 14.10.1897, 4e.
- ²¹ *EFP* 14.10.1897, 4e.
- ²² *Census* PRO RG13 Holbeton, 1901.
- ²³ *DWT* 08.04.1895, 6g.
- ²⁴ Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (PWDRO) 69/M/6/114-116.
- ²⁵ *Census* PRO RG11 Bovey Tracey, 1881; PRO RG12 Compton Gifford and Sidmouth, 1891; PRO RG9 Clyst St Mary and Sidmouth, 1861.
- ²⁶ James McPhail, *The Gardener's Remembrancer* (London, 1807), 155.
- ²⁷ *Census* PRO RG9 Bideford, 1861.
- ²⁸ *Census* PRO RG9 Exeter St Leonard and Holy Trinity, 1861, PRO RG12 Bicton, 1891.
- ²⁹ *Census* PRO HO107 Dartmouth, 1851, PRO RG12 Dawlish, 1891.
- ³⁰ *Census* PRO RG9 Exeter St David, 1861; PRO HO107 Dolton, 1851, PRO RG11 Broadhembury, 1881, Exeter St Sidwell, 1881, Widdicombe, 1881.
- ³¹ *Census* PRO HO107 Dawlish, 1851; PRO RG10 Beckenham, 1871.
- ³² *DWT* 04.08.1871, 4a; 16.02.1872, 4a; 22.09.1871, 4a.
- ³³ *DWT* 22.09.1871, 4a.
- ³⁴ See, for example, *The Times*, 10.07.1872, 3a; 09.09.1884, 12e; 10.09.1884, 14d.
- ³⁵ *Western Times*, 13.02.1863, 4a.
- ³⁶ *The Gardener's Magazine* 15 (1872), 91.
- ³⁷ *Census* PRO HO107 Churchstanton and Alphington, 1851; Heavitree and Talaton, 1841, PRO RG10 Pilton, 1871; PRO RG12 Farringdon, 1891.
- ³⁸ PWDRO 69/M/7/28.
- ³⁹ PWDRO 69/M/6/55/116, 123, 124, 126, 127, 130, 162.
- ⁴⁰ *Gardener's Chronicle* (GC) 05.07.1890, 30.
- ⁴¹ GC 30.07.1887, 146; GC 20.08.1887, 235; GC 5.02.1855, 79; See also GC 26.07.1890, 114; *Exeter Flying Post* (EFP) 29.08.1869.
- ⁴² *DWT* 06.04.1871, 4a.
- ⁴³ See *DWT* 10.04.1863, 4c; 1.05.1863, 4c; 22.5.1872, 4a.
- ⁴⁴ GC 26.07.1890, 114.
- ⁴⁵ GC 02.07.1887, 30.
- ⁴⁶ *EFP* 19.07.1876, 4a.
- ⁴⁷ GC 16.07.1887, 91.
- ⁴⁸ *The Times* 30.01.1801, 4a and 25.08.1858, 12a.
- ⁴⁹ *EFP* 09.03.1815, 4e; *The Times* 07.01.1850, 12c.
- ⁵⁰ *The Times* 06.09.1884, 3b.
- ⁵¹ Small sums could be sent in postage stamps. *DWT* 19.07.1872, 4a.
- ⁵² *DWT* 25.10.1872, 4a; 19.01.1877, 4a.
- ⁵³ *DWT* 19.04.1872, 4a; 20.03.1863, 4a.
- ⁵⁴ GC 26.07.1890, 114; *EFP* 11.12.1861, 4a.
- ⁵⁵ *EFP* 14.08.1834; *DWT* 31.05.1895, 4a.
- ⁵⁶ DRO 961M/M/E34.
- ⁵⁷ DRO 7140 (96M) *East Devon Rental and Account* 1884; DRO 961M/M/E34.
- ⁵⁸ GC 19.07.1890.
- ⁵⁹ *The Times* 18.09.1862, 3a; GC 26.07.1890.
- ⁶⁰ *The Garden* 22.07.1893, 88.
- ⁶¹ William Wynne, 'Some Account of the Nursery Gardens and the State of Horticulture in the Neighbourhood of Philadelphia, with remarks on the Subject of the Emigration of British gardeners to the United States', *GM* 8 (1832), 275.
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- ⁶³ Pamela Sambrook, *Keeping Their Place: Domestic Service in the Country House 1700-1920* (Stroud, 2005), xi.
- ⁶⁴ Merlin Waterson, *The Servants' Hall: A Domestic History of Erdigg* (London, 1980), 10.
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- ⁶⁶ PWDRO 874/2/2.
- ⁶⁷ *Census* PRO RG10 Buckland Brewer, 1871.
- ⁶⁸ GC 26.07.1890.
- ⁶⁹ *Census* PRO RG10-RG14 Farringdon, 1871 to 1891, Exeter 1901.
- ⁷⁰ *EFP* 4.08.1814.
- ⁷¹ *GM*, 17 (1841), 86; *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* 18.11.1862, 655.
- ⁷² Arthur Hooper, *Life in the Gardeners' Bothy* (Suffolk, 2000), 9.

- ⁷³ Basil and Jessie Harley, *A Gardener at Chatsworth: Three Years in the Life of Robert Aughtie 1848-1850* (Worcestershire, 1992), 100.
- ⁷⁴ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1200.
- ⁷⁵ Waterson, *The Servants' Hall*, 10.
- ⁷⁶ *The Gardener* (1870), 88.
- ⁷⁷ *GM* 8 (1832), 499.
- ⁷⁸ Neutral, 'Conduct of Head-Gardeners towards Journeymen' in *Gardener's Magazine*, 5, (1829), 101.
- ⁷⁹ See Art III. 'On the Disabilities experienced by young Gardeners in acquiring professional and general knowledge', *GM* 9 (1833), 165-173, 168; *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* 23.04.1861, 55; *The Gardener's Magazine* 27.01.1872, 54.
- ⁸⁰ *GC* 06.08.1887, 178; *GC* 05.07.1890, 31; *GC* 09.07.1887, 63.
- ⁸¹ *GC* 30.07.1887, 147.
- ⁸² *GC* 20.08.1887, 235.
- ⁸³ *GC* 20.08.1887, 235.
- ⁸⁴ An Under-Gardener, Sudbury Hall, 'The Education of Young Gardeners' in *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* 23.04.1861, 55-56, 55.
- ⁸⁵ Paul Brassley, 'Agricultural science and education', in *AHEW* Vol VII 1850-1914 Part 1 ed. E. J. T. Collins (Cambridge, 2000), 594-649, 622.
- ⁸⁶ Brassley, 'Agricultural', 626.
- ⁸⁷ Alec Ellis, *Educating Our Masters* (Hampshire, 1985), 28, 103.
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- ⁸⁹ DRO QS 32/195-366; 143/1-4; 34/148A.
- ⁹⁰ William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon including The City of Exeter* 2nd edn, (Sheffield and London, 1850), 102-3.
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- ⁹⁴ *Report* (1868).
- ⁹⁵ *Report* (1868).
- ⁹⁶ *EFP* 29.09.1880, 4a.
- ⁹⁷ *EFP* 10.06.1852, 4e.
- ⁹⁸ *The Times* 01.07.1896, 7f.
- ⁹⁹ Brassley, 'Agricultural', 648.
- ¹⁰⁰ *The Garden* 01.04.1893, 270.
- ¹⁰¹ Although their profession was stated, the lists do not always specify from which garden.
- ¹⁰² *The Garden* 24.12.1892, 573; *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society (JRHS)* 26:1-2, August 1901, 265-6.
- ¹⁰³ Maxwell T. Masters and James Douglas, Examiners, *JRHS* 19:1 August 1895, 2.
- ¹⁰⁴ Masters and Douglas, Examiners, *JRHS* 20:1 August 1896, 58.
- ¹⁰⁵ George Henslow, and James Douglas, Examiners, *JRHS* 21:1 August 1897.
- ¹⁰⁶ Henslow and Douglas, Examiners, *JRHS* 26:1-2 August 1901, 267.
- ¹⁰⁷ *The Garden*, 19.12.1891.
- ¹⁰⁸ *The Garden* 18.06.1892, 569.
- ¹⁰⁹ *GM* 19 (1843), 434.
- ¹¹⁰ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 1.
- ¹¹¹ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1324-5.
- ¹¹² Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1324.
- ¹¹³ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1330.
- ¹¹⁴ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1329.
- ¹¹⁵ Loudon, 'Catalogue', 108-20.
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- ¹¹⁷ 'The Effect of a General Penny Post on Periodical Literature', *The Times* 09.05.1839, d.
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- ¹²⁰ James Housman, 'Reading necessary and advantageous to Gardeners' in *GM*, 4 1828, 461-463, 461.
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- ¹²² Robert Fish, 'On the Importance of Gardeners' possessing general and scientific Knowledge, for the Purpose of effecting Improvements in their Art', *GM*, 13 (1837), 49-55, 51.
- ¹²³ *The Garden* 29.03.1890, 300.

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- ¹²⁵ *Practical Gardening: being a series of essays delivered by members and friends of the Devon and Exeter Gardeners' Mutual Improvement Association During the session 1891-2* (Exeter, 1893), Preface.
- ¹²⁶ DWT 08.02.1895, 6f; DWT 08.03.1895, 6g; DWT 10.01.1896, 2c.
- ¹²⁷ DWT 07.03.1895, 6g.
- ¹²⁸ EFP 27.07.1895.
- ¹²⁹ EFP 12.10.1897; 3.11.1900
- ¹³⁰ EFP 27.11.1867; EFP 6.05.1868 also Mr Craggs, gardener to J C Bowring Esq., Mr Mollen, gardener to W. Brooks Esq., Mr Gillard, gardener to J. Daw Esq., and Mr Foote, gardener to Sir L. Palk of Haldon House.
- ¹³¹ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (London, 1969), 70.
- ¹³² DWT 7.06.1895, 5e.
- ¹³³ Census PRO RG9 Exeter St Thomas, 1861.
- ¹³⁴ Thomas H. Mawson, *The Life and Work of an English Landscape Architect* (London, 1927), 26-27.
- ¹³⁵ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1199.
- ¹³⁶ Not beyond the age 17.
- ¹³⁷ Devon Census returns 1851-1901; DRO 3009A-99/PO9/28; DRO 3212A/PO113/1/82; DRO 3610Z and add 2-4; EFP 29.08.1877; PWDRO 874/3/14.
- ¹³⁸ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1324.
- ¹³⁹ DRO 3610Z and add/1.
- ¹⁴⁰ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1199.
- ¹⁴¹ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1324.
- ¹⁴² GC 20.08.1887.
- ¹⁴³ Census PRO RG11 Cardynham, Cornwall, 1881; PRO RG13 Plymouth Charles, 1901.
- ¹⁴⁴ From the French 'journée' meaning a day. John Ayto, *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins* (London, 1990), 309.
- ¹⁴⁵ Census PRO HO107 Heavitree, 1851; PRO RG9 Exeter St Mary Major, 1861.
- ¹⁴⁶ GM 4 (1828); H. R. Fletcher, *The Story of the Royal Horticultural Society* (Oxford, 1969), 507.
- ¹⁴⁷ DRO 3610Z and add/1; PWDRO 74/729; DRO Z19/20/36.
- ¹⁴⁸ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1200.
- ¹⁴⁹ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 10.
- ¹⁵⁰ Harley and Harley, 152, 4th June, 1849.
- ¹⁵¹ A Foreman, *The Gardener* 01.03.1902, 146.
- ¹⁵² *The Garden* 15.03.1902, 179 and 16.08.1902, 116.
- ¹⁵³ PWDRO 874/3/43 May 9th 1837.
- ¹⁵⁴ DRO 961M/add E34 September 9th 1862.
- ¹⁵⁵ DRO 1508M/Devon/Accounts/V64.
- ¹⁵⁶ Samuel Badman, 'Present Position and Future Prospects of Gardeners', *The Gardener's Magazine* (1872), 404-5, 404.
- ¹⁵⁷ Badman, 404.
- ¹⁵⁸ Census PRO RG11 Plymouth and North Tawton, 1881.
- ¹⁵⁹ Census PRO RG11-12 Poltimore, 1881, Highweek. 1891.
- ¹⁶⁰ Archibald McNaughton, 'On the Life of a Jobbing Gardener' GM, 1, (1826), 24-26.
- ¹⁶¹ EFP 5.04.1890.
- ¹⁶² Powderham Castle C/2/7 Box 3 F136; DRO 867B/E8/1.
- ¹⁶³ EFP 18.10.76.
- ¹⁶⁴ Census PRO RG11 Tiverton, 1881.
- ¹⁶⁵ Census PRO RG11 Exeter St David, 1881.
- ¹⁶⁶ Census PRO RG12 Pilton, 1891; PRO HO107 Northam, 1851; PRO RG9 Northam, 1861.
- ¹⁶⁷ Plymouth, Bideford, Exeter Union, Exeter City, Axminster, Barnstaple, Stoke Damerel, Holsworthy, Totnes, Tavistock and Newton Abbot.
- ¹⁶⁸ A Gardener, Hillfield, Near Stanmore, Middlesex in *The Gardeners' Gazette* 4 (1837), 57.
- ¹⁶⁹ GC 3.02.1855, 65.
- ¹⁷⁰ *The Garden* 11.02.1893, 117; 18.03 1893, 224.
- ¹⁷¹ *The Garden* 28.01.1893, 77.
- ¹⁷² *The Garden* 1.07.1893, 17-18.
- ¹⁷³ John Cameron, 'On the Conduct of Gardeners and their Employers', GM 3, (1827), 156-157.
- ¹⁷⁴ Mawson, *Life & Works*, xv.
- ¹⁷⁵ GM 8 (1832), 131.
- ¹⁷⁶ PWDRO 273/306.
- ¹⁷⁷ Glenny, *Practical Gardening*, 13, 15.

CHAPTER THREE

‘Of Operators and Serving Gardeners’

Introduction

Garden Labourers

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CHAPTER THREE

‘Of Operators or Serving Gardeners’¹

Of serving gardeners, there are two species, with their varieties; the public gardener and private gardener. The latter is the only species to be recommended in a general way.²

New garden fashion, imported plants and new techniques increased the demands made on gardeners throughout the century. Tools with which the men worked also changed, generally for the better, with the use of stronger and more lightweight materials. Mechanisation brought a need for new skills which included maintenance of machinery. Gardeners also had to acquaint themselves with chemicals as new pesticides and fertilisers were developed. Changes were reported and commented on in the horticultural press which engendered a small industry to cater to a demand for information.

By the twentieth century, gardeners had split into two distinct groups. The first were little more than agricultural labourers, often locally born and with basic practical training gained through working with more experienced gardeners. Many of these men undertook the heavy unskilled work such as digging and hoeing. On some estates they also worked in the fields during harvest time and in the woodlands during the winter.³ It was rare for a garden labourer to advance to the position of head gardener, but some developed highly prized skills relevant to gardening such as pruning, grafting or mowing with a scythe, a skill that did not die out with the advent of the lawnmower. They also knew the soil, terrain and climate of their particular area far better than some career gardeners who moved from garden to garden in search of experience. The second group were the professional men who entered a garden as a garden boy, apprentice or improver with the sole intention of becoming a head gardener. The education of these men has been looked at in Chapter Two. This chapter considers the daily lives of practical working gardeners, their duties, wages, living and working conditions.

Introduction

The ‘serving gardeners’ of the nineteenth century were mostly those who worked in the private gardens of the aristocracy, the gentry and the wealthier middle classes. Known as ‘gardener domestic servant’, ‘gardener (employee)’, ‘garden labourer’ or simply ‘gardener’ in the census enumerators’ books; as ‘the gardener’ or ‘your gardener’ or

‘garden labourer’ in estate accounts, these were the men, and some women, who laid out, planted and maintained the gardens of the nineteenth century. The number of gardeners employed nationally increased significantly throughout the second half of the century. By 1891, in Devon, census statistics show there were 6,157 gardeners, nurserymen and seedsmen serving a population of just over 630,000.⁴ This number had more than doubled from the figure of 2,495 in 1851. However, this does not tell the whole story. Due to inaccuracies in the returns and the way that the statistics were compiled, some gardeners were missed from this total. For example, by trawling through the census returns of 1851 an additional 115 Devon gardeners were found. These included those who listed their occupations as ‘groom and gardener’ or ‘coachman and gardener’, and who would have been counted under their first occupation.⁵

Figure 3:1. Comparison of increase of domestic gardeners, market gardeners and nurserymen in England and Wales with numbers in Devon

Date	England and Wales	Percentage Increase	Devon	Percentage Increase
1841	53,650		1,436	
1851	88,673	65.28	2,495	73.75
1861	96,071	8.34	2,815	12.83
1871	122,383	27.39	3,942	40.04
1881	148,285	21.17	4,873	23.62
1891	179,336	20.94	6,157	26.35

Source: Census Tables.⁶

Figure 3:2. Comparison of increase in population between England and Wales and Devon 1841 to 1891

Date	Population England and Wales	Percentage Increase	Population Devon	Percentage Increase
1841	15,914,148	14.27	512,959	7.00
1851	17,927,609	12.65	567,098	10.55
1861	20,066,224	11.93	589,385	3.93
1871	22,712,266	13.19	601,374	2.03
1881	25,974,439	14.36	608,400	1.17
1891	29,002,525	11.66	636,225	4.57

Source: Census Tables as above.

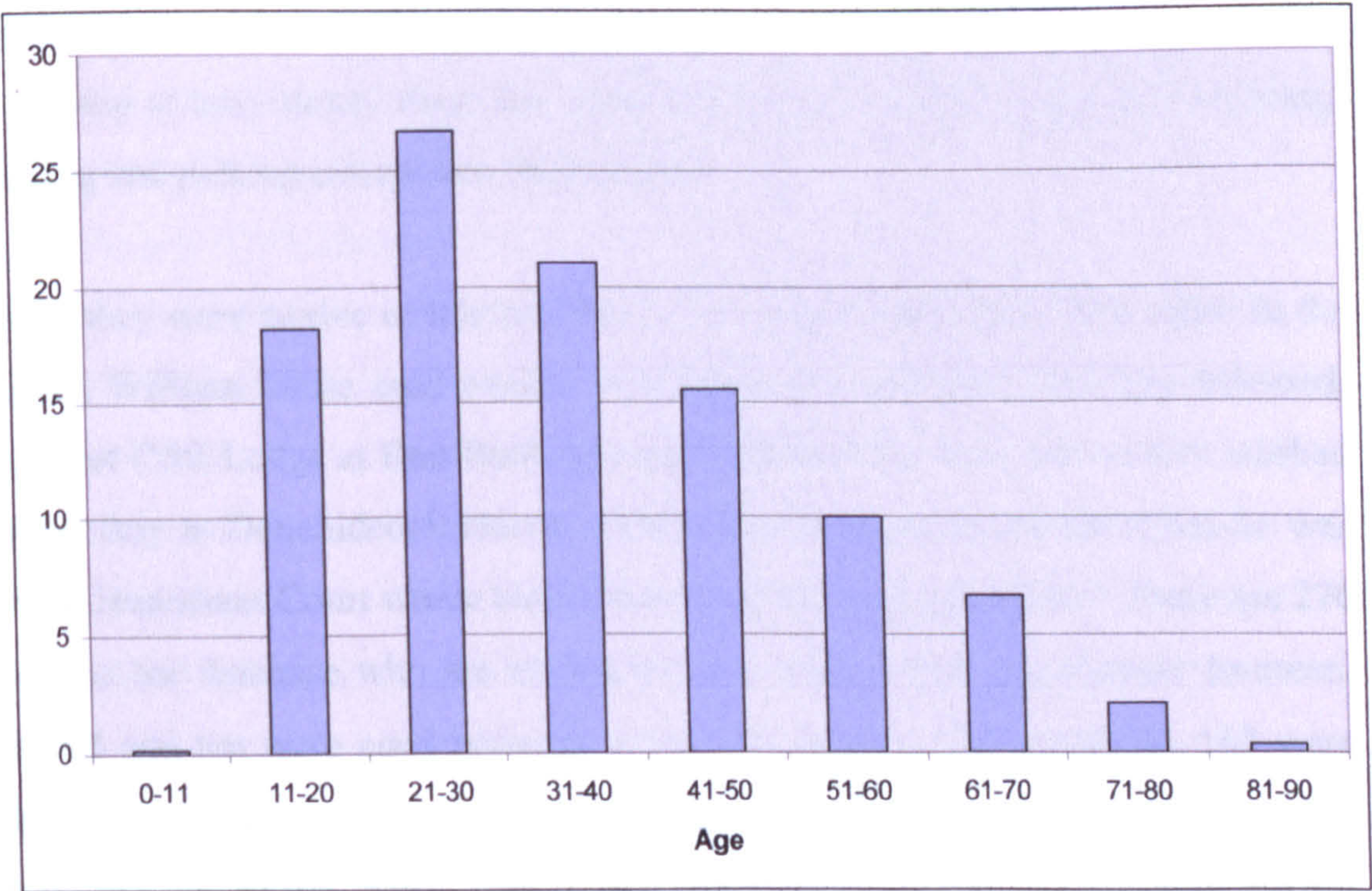
A large increase in the number of gardeners in 1851 was due to reclassification of men who had been listed as labourer or male servant in the 1841 census (see Figure 3:1). Insufficient coverage in 1841 meant many people were missed altogether from the census returns. In similar fashion the increase in the number for the 1861 census was partially due to many men being re-classified from 'agricultural labourer' to 'gardener'. Although the population of Devon had not increased at the same rate as it had nationally the number of gardeners per head of population was greater in Devon (see Figure 3:2).

There was an assumption that where the qualifier 'domestic' was used in census returns that these gardeners were in service. This meant they would have been paid an annual salary which usually included some form of accommodation. Those listed simply as 'gardeners' were deemed to be market or jobbing gardeners, or those who gardened in private gardens but who were employed by the year, the week or as needed for a particular job. These men were paid wages by the day or task. This does not help to distinguish between those who were not listed as servants, but who worked in private gardens, from those who worked in market gardens and nurseries. Nor does it help identify those who simply described their jobs as 'labourer', 'general', or 'agricultural' labourer, yet were based in gardens. Some of these men have been identified through estate labour books or from alternative records, such as parish registers.

By 1891, census categories were changed with information required as to whether an individual was an 'employer', 'employed' or 'neither employer nor employed but working on own account'. This still does not help distinguish those who worked in private gardens from those employed in the commercial sector, although 'employers' were almost always working for themselves as market or jobbing gardeners, nor does it specify whether a man was skilled or unskilled. It is sometimes possible to identify whether a gardener was living on or near an estate where they were most likely to have worked. This however, is fraught with difficulty and speculation. Classification becomes more difficult towards the end of the century as many who gardened in urban areas for villa owners and small estates would have lived nearby, but not necessarily in the house or garden. James Ratcliffe, for example, lived at Ashley Villa in Heavitree, his employer at Bellair, a couple of streets away.⁷ Comparison with directories has helped distinguish between some individuals.

To date it has been possible to identify a total of 4,481 gardeners who gardened in private gardens from 1800 to 1900. This equates to almost thirty per cent of the 15,000 plus gardeners listed on the database. A further 6,301 ‘gardeners’ have been identified, but it has not been possible to determine whether they worked in the private or commercial sector.⁸ As shown in Chapter Two many gardeners moved between the different branches of the profession. John Coombes began his career as a nursery labourer then became a private gardener. William Coleman and Frank Langdon, both began their careers as private gardeners; they worked as jobbing gardeners before becoming market gardeners and finally returning to jobbing.⁹

Figure 3:3. Percentage of private gardeners by age 1800-1899



Source: Gardener database.

A gardener could have been any age from nine to ninety, although it has been difficult to find ages prior to the census of 1841.¹⁰ Many, in common with people of their time, did not remember how old they were and sometimes there could be as much as a ten year discrepancy from one census year to another. Analysis of the ages of gardeners throughout the century suggests the most common age group was in the range 21 to 30 years old with 26.7% of gardeners falling into this category. The least common age was in the group 0-11, followed by the over 80 age group (see Figure 3:3 above).¹¹ Analysis by decade shows these figures to remain consistent through the second half of the nineteenth century. Gardening was hard work and therefore suited to younger men. By

the time a gardener had reached the age of thirty-five he had reached his peak physically and hoped to be in a settled situation. Successful professional men became head gardeners, or a 'first gardener' in a small establishment. Labourers aimed to be in a secure position with income sufficient to raise a family.

Garden Labourers

The lowliest members of the gardening fraternity were garden labourers. Men were employed for menial and heavy tasks such as trenching, digging, hoeing, weeding, watering, carting manure and coals, and grass cutting. Women labourers undertook, supposedly, lighter employment such as hand weeding, stone-picking, planting out seedlings, harvesting, fruit picking and tidying up jobs.¹² Girls worked alongside their mothers to help at busy times. Boys too, helped with routine tasks especially weeding, stone-picking and picking caterpillars from bushes.

By the time they were twelve or thirteen boys were employed in their own right. In the 1881 census, William White aged twelve, was listed as a 'gardener' to Mary Selwood, 'Lady' of East Cliff Lodge at East Budleigh and Frederick Horwill, also twelve worked as a Garden Boy at Dunchideock House. Arthur Needs was only eleven when he was employed at Huntsham Court where his widowed mother was caretaker.¹³ There are 276 youngsters on the database who are known to have started work aged under fourteen. One hundred and ten were aged between seven and twelve. The remaining 165 were aged thirteen. These are only the youngsters who were listed in the census or similar documents. The age of the 'boys', 'sons', and 'daughters' who appear in estate records is rarely recorded.

Smaller gardens might have only had one permanent gardener in charge, with perhaps a boy or labourer to help. The position of gardener was often combined with another role, usually that of a groom or general handyman, and often an ability to milk a cow was also called for.¹⁴ Other roles were not uncommon, James Lugg at Plymstock in 1861 was a footman and gardener and William Cartwright at Doddiscombesleigh also acted as a gamekeeper.¹⁵ By the end of the nineteenth century, many villa owners would have gardened themselves and employed a jobbing gardener to do the heavy work as and when needed; or employed a coachman or groom who would also attend to the garden.

At Endsleigh in 1897, Charles Westlake, George Hendy and William Whiting were kitchen gardeners. John Southcott spent most of his year mowing and pruning; Thomas Yole was in charge of the flower gardens, James Stephens dealt with the water features, maintaining the leat in Dairy Dell and cleaning out the pond. The other gardeners laid turf, planted, weeded and tidied, they also undertook heavier work in areas further away from the house.¹⁶ The fact that these men worked exclusively in discrete areas argues for a degree of specialism which helped career advancement and illustrates well the journeyman system where gardeners moved from garden to garden to obtain experience in different departments. It also emphasises the difference between knowledgeable and labouring gardeners.

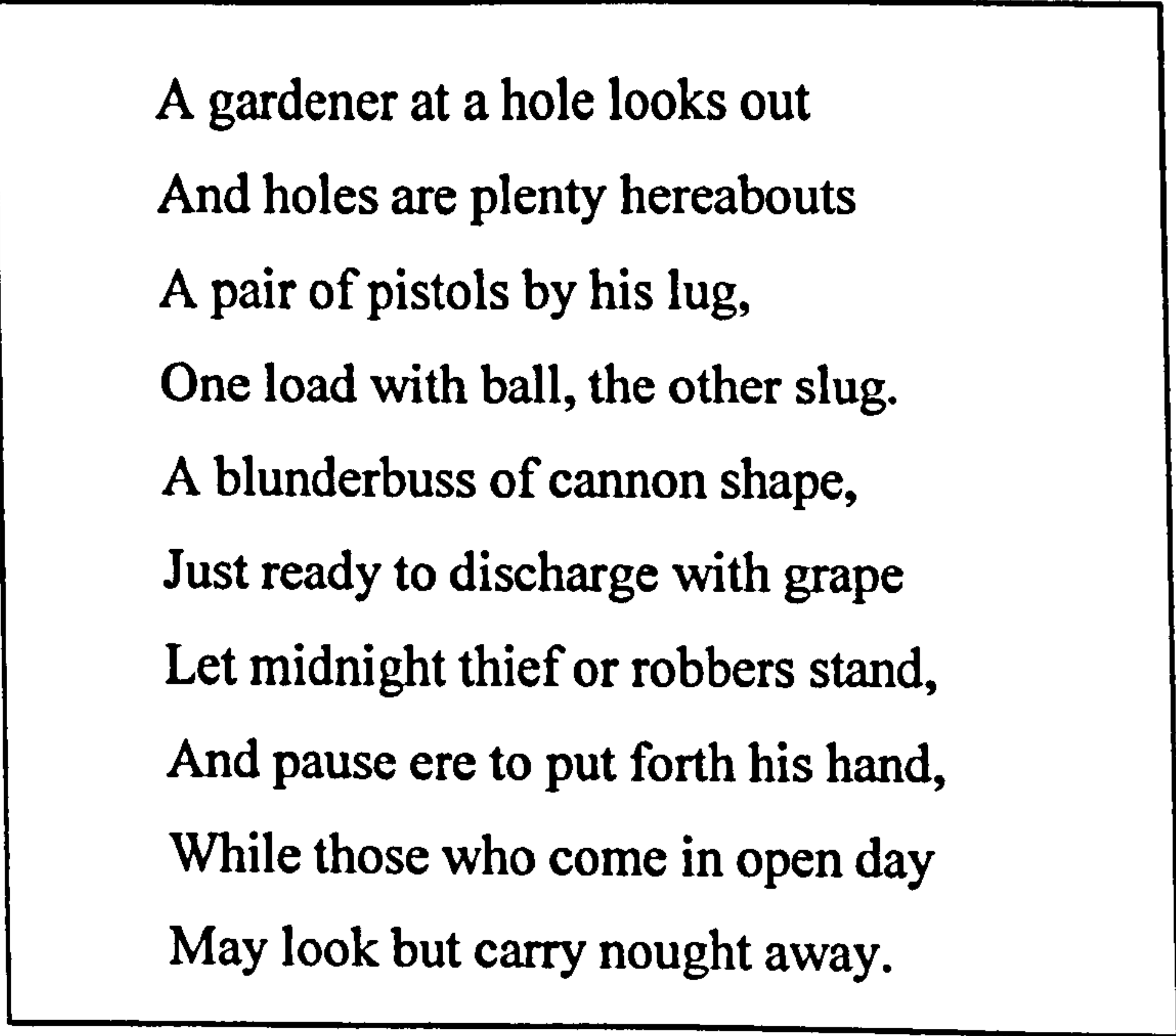
Most men remained as under gardeners, garden assistants or journeymen all their working lives. Some had specialist jobs. John Crocker (1878), William Stoneman (1891) and James Couch (1901), were known as 'Stokers' who looked after the boilers for the greenhouses at Streatham Hall and probably cared for the central heating boiler for the Hall as well. These were not young apprentices but men in their thirties and forties.¹⁷ Richard Northcott, the carter at Endsleigh was paid an extra 2d a day.¹⁸ A garden carter was generally paid slightly more than his workmates because, in addition to his other duties, he had a horse to care for before the other men started work and again when they had finished. Produce was taken to market or to the station; coal, manure and plants were brought into the garden. Rubbish was carted from one area of the garden to be disposed of in another.¹⁹ If there was sufficient room, the horse could also be used to help in ploughing the kitchen garden.

Apart from gardening, gardeners undertook a variety of tasks. One winter job was to fill the ice house. To ensure a good supply of ice for the summer months, shallow pools were constructed, frequently, but not always, near the ice house. When there was sufficient depth of ice it was broken up and dragged to the side of the pond with long poles. At the icehouse it was packed down tightly and covered with a thick layer of sawdust, straw or matting for insulation.²⁰ Gardeners were employed for this job because it was a quiet period in the garden. At Escot on January 8th 1867, twenty men were paid extra for taking in ice at 9d a day each for two days. The following year eighteen men were only paid 6d extra per day, but were also supplied with twenty gallons of beer to share.²¹ At the other extreme, gardeners were also trained as fire-fighters.²²

The core garden staff were not laid off during the winter; there were always maintenance tasks to be undertaken, especially in glasshouses, which needed cleaning and fumigating. Snow had to be beaten off trees and shrubs so none broke under the weight. Other tasks were found to keep men busy, these included collecting sand from the beach, digging holes for trees and shrubs or clearing roads.²³ Bad weather and the winter months gave an opportunity to clean equipment, chop wood, make labels, sort stored vegetables, make birch brooms and sharpen sticks and stakes.²⁴ When there were storms as on August 11th 1897 and May 1st 1898, every gardener helped in the clearing up process.²⁵

Gardeners were also used as ‘watchers’. This term covered a variety of jobs. Five men were paid for guarding and keeping fires burning in the new wings at Bicton House in 1842. In total £32.1s.6d was paid for ‘watching nightly’.²⁶ At Christmas, evergreens were taken to be sold in local markets for decoration. Watchers were paid to guard against this theft. There was also a problem of plant stealing where there were a lot of strangers visiting a garden, especially when the general public were admitted, but visitors to Bicton in 1850 were confronted with notice boards aimed to deter would be thieves. The board assumes that these people could read, which informs about the visitors hoping to take home specimens for their own gardens (see Figure 3:4).

Figure 3:4. Wording on cautionary notice board at Bicton



A gardener at a hole looks out
And holes are plenty hereabouts
A pair of pistols by his lug,
One load with ball, the other slug.
A blunderbuss of cannon shape,
Just ready to discharge with grape
Let midnight thief or robbers stand,
And pause ere to put forth his hand,
While those who come in open day
May look but carry nought away.

Source: William Pollard, *Pollard's Official History and Guide to Exeter* (Exeter, 1894), 92.

Jobbing Gardeners

The life of a jobbing gardener was difficult and uncertain. In 1894 and 1896 respectively he was described as occupying, 'the least enviable position in the ranks of the gardening fraternity', and as, 'a Jack of all trades who is supposed to know and to do anything or everything'.²⁷ Jobbing gardeners had a bad reputation for poor quality work, a lack of knowledge and for being light-fingered, but Malcolm Dunn claimed;

In their ranks are many excellent gardeners and employers who have seen better times, but through stress of circumstances, failing health, or misfortune arising from no fault of their own, find themselves in a position where they are unable to command regular daily service or permanent employment.

Although sympathetic to the lot of a jobbing gardener, he also noted that there were some who, 'gravitate to this class from all other branches of the profession after having been cast adrift by their own folly or incapacity', and that they took work from, 'capable and reliable' men.²⁸

Thomas Johnson, of Exeter, fulfilled some of these descriptions in that he was described as a pensioner who eked out his income as a jobbing gardener. He was accused, and found guilty, of stealing a garden spade, fork and mattock and selling them. His sentence was imprisonment for six weeks with hard labour.²⁹ This was as much a warning to other men as a punishment to Johnson.

The three areas which had the most jobbing gardeners were Axminster, Heavitree and Torquay. This could be to do with the enumerators and how they made their returns, but all three areas had nurseries and market gardens as well as growing urban development. Torquay was also home to many villas with spacious gardens.³⁰

Monica Brewis suggests that once amateur gardeners had taken over their own gardening that many gardeners were 'reduced to the status of a machine tool: a strong pair of hands whose only value was to carry out the hard manual labour involved in making the garden'.³¹ However, some jobbing gardeners had specialist skills. An age old tradition in Devon was that gardeners, such as William Moor in 1759, travelled around the county moving from one garden to another to undertake pruning or grafting work.³² Seventy-five years later, William Shepherd and William Sanders were each paid ten shillings a week, for four weeks, for pruning work done, 'on Mr Ilbert's property'.³³

Jobbing gardeners worked as and when they could find employment. This might mean working for a local nursery as did William Glanville, who worked for Veitch. He was paid 12s a week and supplied his own tools. John Harvey at Moretonhampstead worked in a market garden. Harry Denner was one of the men who combined a small market garden business with jobbing for others.³⁴ An alternative would be that they would have regular work with several employers, most frequently villa owners. J. Madge and his son worked one day a week for Christopher Hamlyn at Paschoe Barton and a man called Rookes worked for a Miss Burnett one day a week at Colleton Crescent Exeter. The latter was paid 3s 6d per day, but paid quarterly.³⁵ The Reverend Henry Burgess complained that jobbing gardeners' charges were too high. They did however, have to provide all their own tools and, even in London, Archibald McNaughton claimed the highest wage he could command was three shillings a day.³⁶

Women in the garden

Women have generally been absent from histories of gardening, but this does not mean that they were not active. Narratives have to be based on records available, which are few and far between. Even Yvonne Cuthbertson, in writing her history of women gardeners, had problems finding information about the very people she was attempting to document. This necessitates many repetitions of the nature that, 'women were employed as weeders' and that they, 'were responsible for the vegetable garden'.³⁷ Both these statements are true until the vegetable garden, at least in estate gardens, increased in importance. It then became the province of the head gardener. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, as occupational and domestic roles changed, women were considered to have more leisure time to look after their family and undertake more feminine pursuits such as looking after a flower garden. Most vegetable gardening, even in cottage gardens, became the province of men.

It was not until the very end of the nineteenth century that women were accepted as 'gardeners' in their own right. Even then worries had been expressed publicly about the effect women would have on young men working in a garden. Additional concerns were that they would not have sufficient strength to undertake the physical labour needed for practical gardening. Of equal concern was that, in the unlikely event of becoming a head gardener, that they would have difficulty in managing a garden.³⁸ Presumably, this latter worry was more about how they would gain respect from the men working in a garden.

Unless they were daughters of gardeners or nurserymen, it was difficult for women to obtain practical training. An indication that daughters assisted their parents and learned some of the arts of the nursery or market gardening business is in the fact that they entered and won prizes in horticultural shows.³⁹

During the 1890s several educational establishments were set up to provide courses in agriculture and horticulture specifically aimed at women. Swanley Horticultural College in Kent was one of the first establishments to take in women students in 1891. This was so successful that by 1903 all 63 students were female. The first lady gardeners were employed at the Botanic Gardens at Kew in 1895, causing a sensation when working in their 'bloomers'. Here the horticultural school had eight women students by 1901. At about the same time, Daisy, Countess of Warwick, set up a project called the 'Agricultural Scheme for Women' which aimed to encourage educated women to work in light farming and gardening among other rural occupations. Together with Miss Edith Bradley she set up a training establishment based at Reading University in 1898. In an article in *The Times* Lady Warwick explained that her object:

...was to find a new opening for educated women of the middle classes by affording them a training in what properly belongs to the lighter side of agriculture – namely, dairy work, market gardening, poultry keeping, bee-keeping, fruit-growing, horticulture, and the marketing of produce.⁴⁰

There were several reasons for enticing women into horticulture. These included the worry about the amount of land going out of cultivation, the threat from food imports, and the necessity to find work for educated middle-class women.

In the South West the Devon School of Gardening was set up in Ivybridge near Plymouth by May Crooke and Mabel Carlyon two of the first students from Studley College. The school, which was only in existence from about 1911 to 1917, catered for young ladies who wished to learn about horticulture, and gave practical and theoretical instruction. The students went from the school at Ivybridge to a college in Plymouth to learn book-keeping as part of their course. The aim of the school was to 'turn out women capable of filling some of the many posts offered, or of returning to their own Estates or Gardens and working them to the very best advantage'.⁴¹ This became more necessary as so many young men were lost during the First World War. It has proved difficult to find more than a few details of the establishment based in the gardens of

Stowford Mill which contained ten glasshouses, a variety of fruit trees and extensive lawns and flower gardens.⁴²

These educational schemes were not aimed at working class women. At £50 to £70 per year for a two or three year course, the fees were beyond the incomes of any but the wealthier middle class.⁴³ A few were able to obtain scholarships which covered their board as well as their fees.⁴⁴

There was however, an organisation which was designed to encourage women agriculturalists to join together in support of each other. The Women's Agricultural and Horticultural International Union (later the 'International' was dropped) was designed to improve the lot of women working on the land. As Peter King states, there was no intention that the upper class women who formed the Association should be allowed to take part in the physical aspects of gardening. They were merely acting on the behalf of gentlewomen wishing to gain employment on the land. The Union was aimed at professional gardeners and farmers, but attracted several amateurs. The founder members included fifteen working gardeners, ten dairy owners, twelve amateurs and six small-holders.⁴⁵

Another organisation with similar aims was the Women's Farm and Garden Association which was founded in 1899 by the Countess of Warwick, and which is still in existence today. One of the functions of these organisations was to act as an employment agency, placing women gardeners in estate gardens. King comments that it was noticeable that those women who trained at the horticultural colleges had less trouble in finding a suitable position than those who were without qualifications.⁴⁶

Women gardeners were under represented in the census returns.⁴⁷ A breakdown of the figures for 1851 in Devon and Cornwall shows some differences between the counties (see Figure 3:5). Not only were there more women gardeners in Cornwall at this time, but they commenced working at an earlier age, while in Devon it appears they worked well into their 80s. Due to the way that census questions changed from decade to decade, it is impossible to make a direct comparison between them, but the number of women gardeners enumerated remained almost the same in Devon between 1851 and 1881, despite the fact that the number of male gardeners increased by approximately two hundred per cent during the same period.⁴⁸

Figure 3:5. Women gardeners by age from 1851 census

Devon															
Occupation	All	15-	20-	25-	30-	35-	40-	45-	50-	55-	60-	65-	70-	75-	80-
Gardener	63	3	3	2	2	4	4	5	8	5	6	12	4	3	2
Cornwall															
Occupation	All	10-	15-	20-	25-	30-	35-	40-	45-	50-	55-	60-	65-	70-	75-
Gardener	113	6	25	14	12	8	4	3	11	14	5	4	2	2	3

Source: *Census (1851): population tables, part II: ages, civil condition, occupations and birthplace of the people* (PP 1854, LXXXVII vol 1); *Census (1881) Volume III, ages, condition as to marriage, occupations and birth-places of the people* (PP 1883, LXXX).

The earliest records for women working in private gardens from the database are for Mary Dawe, Mary Cole, Elizabeth Mead and Betty Merrivale (who became Betty Judson), all of whom worked at Maristow in 1801.⁴⁹ Mary Hill is listed as a ‘gardener’ in *Pigot’s Directory* of 1830, and Mary Gibbs was a market gardener at Exeter St Thomas in 1832. Ann Ford was a nurserywoman in 1835 and by 1841 there were five female gardeners identified from census returns for Devon. These include Harriet Kerswell, later a nursery proprietor of Exeter St Thomas and Ann Sears who gardened in the same parish. Elizabeth Maddock and Sarah Vickary worked in Heavitree and Ann Reeves at North Tawton. The latter four were probably market gardeners.⁵⁰ By 1851, eighty-four wives, daughter and heads of household who worked in some capacity as a gardener have been identified of which Mary Russell of Fortfield Nursery, Sidmouth was not only head of her household, but also employed three men.⁵¹ In 1861 there were fifty-one additional women noted, in 1871 so far, only twenty have been found and from the census enumerators’ returns of 1881, 1891 and 1901, only sixty new women per census have been identified.⁵²

The 1881 census summary tables suggest that there were only 45 women gardeners in service in the whole of England and Wales. Three of these were in Somerset, but there were none listed for Devon, Cornwall or Dorset. This was probably because women who worked in gardens were not considered to be servants, but as daily or weekly labourers. There were throughout England and Wales 2,364 women listed as non-domestic gardeners plus 735 under the heading ‘Nursery, Seedsman and Florist’.⁵³ Many of the former would have worked in estate gardens, the rest would have worked in market gardens and nurseries as day labourers or seasonal workers.

Although it is known that many women worked outside the home, either casually, part-time or full-time, these occupations rarely appear in the census. It was recognised that men often had more than one job and allowances were made for this in how occupations were listed on the census form. The clerks who compiled the statistics for summary tables took the first occupation listed as the most important one and therefore some 'gardeners' were lost by being excluded. Women, too, often had more than one occupation, and certainly more than merely 'wife'. Edward Higgs suggests that the figures collected for the census were inaccurate because they were a reflection of 'certain assumptions about the position of women in society'.⁵⁴ Part of this assumption was that a wife was dependent on her husband, another that women's work was of little importance and therefore not valued enough to be recorded.

Attitudes to women working underwent a change during the nineteenth century. The 1842 *Commission on the Employment of Women in Agriculture* concluded that 'in Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon and Somerset work done by female parish apprentices and adult women on the land was little different from that of men'.⁵⁵ Charles Vancouver who wrote the *General View of the Agriculture of Devon* had expressed horror that young females should undertake such hard work and called for reform.⁵⁶ Bridget Hill suggests this indicated a change in attitude to how women were perceived. Women and girls were not doing anything different but Vancouver, and others, saw the work they were undertaking as 'unfeminine and unsuitable for women'.⁵⁷

Women were forced through financial necessity to work for very low wages, often earning less than their own sons. This was due in part to the labour economy which assumed that a man would be able to earn sufficient to keep both wife and children, and therefore a woman's wage was a bonus, not a necessity. However, this was not the case. The addition of a woman's wage to a household income served to keep men's wages low, yet because men's wages were so low, women had to work to supplement them. Joyce Burnette maintained payment to adult males may have included remuneration for work done by other members of the family.⁵⁸ This was true in the case of John Keddie's wife, Ann who earned 2s 6d a week as a housekeeper in another of the Ilbert family houses. Her income was paid not to her, but to her husband.⁵⁹

Many couples earned a joint income where the husband was a gardener and his wife expected to occupy another role on the estate, as a lodge keeper, or laundress for

example. Gardeners' wives were expected to help when needed with weeding and harvest regardless of other commitments. Census enumerators' returns did not take into account large numbers of women who helped husbands or fathers in market gardens or nurseries. When counting women who worked on farms, it was recommended to enumerators that women helping with daily work should be listed as 'farmer wife'. This occupation 'wife' term was used also with gardeners and suggests that many more women were working as helpers in the family economy.⁶⁰ The fact that so many women took over a business when widowed, suggests that they probably had previous experience of working alongside their husbands as they did in estate gardens.

More than six hundred women are listed on the database as 'gardener's wife'. Most would have helped their husbands. A further eighty-seven stated specifically that they worked in the garden, either a market garden or nursery. Sixteen per cent of gardeners' wives on the database were laundresses. A further sixteen per cent had portable craft occupations such as dressmaker, milliner, glover, or lace-maker. There are also thirty-eight servants listed, nineteen charwomen, thirty-nine house-keepers, and fifty-nine cooks. A few wives had higher status occupations; thirteen were teachers, three were midwives and Pheobe Bridgeman was a post-mistress.⁶¹

At Saltram in the 1820s Mary Lewis was employed in the flower garden while Mary Grigg worked in the kitchen garden. Both women worked between twenty-three and twenty-seven days per calendar month all the year round.⁶² In other gardens women were employed as needed during the spring and summer months or to supplement the male labour.⁶³ Betty Trewin and Ann Grear worked as weeders at Maristow in 1820.⁶⁴ Women's tasks included repetitious work such as collecting and clearing away prunings, following the men after they had mown the lawn to collect grass cuttings, picking caterpillars from gooseberry bushes and cabbages, sweeping paths and courtyards. Much of the harvesting was also done by women, fruit picking, seed, nut, berry and cone gathering. In 1847 Ann Morrish was paid to collect hawthorn berries and acorns at Powderham for planting in the nursery.⁶⁵ One of the main tasks was weeding. Women weeded borders, lawns, hedges and paths as well as crops in the garden.⁶⁶ However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, new chemicals for weeding gravel paths, and for pest control, combined with boxes to collect grass cuttings, saw fewer women needed in a garden. Some of the tasks traditionally undertaken by women became the province of garden boys and apprentices.

Bothy Living

At smaller establishments where most gardeners had been drawn from sons of estate workers, young lads remained at home with their families. However, an increased number of apprentices, improvers, journeymen and foremen, mostly single men in their twenties and thirties, who travelled from garden to garden in search of work and experience, needed housing and so the bothy system was introduced where single gardeners were provided with accommodation of their own. This was not always a comfortable experience as many bothies were built on the north side of the kitchen garden and were little more than store sheds that had been converted to basic accommodation. They were frequently dark, damp and poorly equipped. Even as late as 1929 at Norman Court in Hampshire, the bothy had insufficient chairs for the number of gardeners (six), no furnishings in the sitting room and no running water.⁶⁷

Many, perhaps most, owners of large places are fully aware of the great benefit that a well-arranged bothy is to the lads and young men, to whom it is a home for perhaps a couple of years of their life, at an age when good housing, away from temptations, and in addition, some kindly leading and careful watching may make the whole difference in the bent of a life.⁶⁸

In 1902 the *Editorial* above began an attempt to encourage owners and head gardeners to improve bothies in which men lived. This inspired a flurry of letters to the editor describing the experiences, most of them poor, of bothy inhabitants. Improvements were suggested many of which were not luxuries but access to basic necessities.

A bothy was an asset to a garden where someone needed to be on the spot to attend to boilers, or to ventilate glasshouses as necessary, where a delay might have resulted in harm to plants. At night, 'men on [greenhouse] duty had to be up every four hours which took about an hour to register temperatures of various houses'.⁶⁹ Despite set hours of work, bothy gardeners were effectively 'on duty' for twenty four hours a day, and when not at work were expected to undertake some form of study. The employers' attitude to bothy living, endorsed by many head gardeners, was that the discomfort endured in their accommodation was somehow character strengthening. The independence of living in a bothy was supposed to teach men to be 'careful and provident'.⁷⁰

The chief drawback perhaps, setting aside the question of expense, is the fear of making things too easy at the outset of life, which must needs be difficult in the long run, at the risk of weakening individual character and effort.⁷¹

It was as if the career of gardening was sufficient reward in itself and basic living standards were deemed unimportant. This attitude was galling to many gardeners as the plants they cared for lived in much better conditions than they did themselves.

R.B. was one of the first gardeners to respond to the editorial explaining:

The original Scotch bothy was rough in the extreme – a mere shelter in most cases, where the farm lads, with national frugality and independence, fared for themselves as best they mightA bothy nowadays means something very different and very rightly so and well managed is an admirable institution.⁷²

The problem was that too few were well managed. R.B. explained the dilemma of a bothy from the point of view of the employers, seeking to excuse the poor living conditions. He talked of the agricultural depression which had forced landowners 'to reduce their outlay' suggesting that 'a suitable building, simply, but adequately equipped' was a 'costly addition to the working expenses of a garden'. He went on to maintain that gardeners preferred an independent life. He suggested that, where a bothy could not be provided, a building be set aside for use at meal times and 'as a reading and recreation room in the long winter evenings'.⁷³ From the tone of the letter, it suggests that this was written by a head gardener, who would have been ultimately responsible for the well-being of gardeners in his charge. His reasoning that the agricultural depression was to blame for the poor quality of bothies is invalid as complaints had been made about poor accommodation for young men before the depression. Alexander Somerville in 1848 had written:

Outside the bothy, all was flowery green, and ornamental... yet behind the bricks in that floral paradise, the greenhouse, there was our sleeping place, as odiously unhealthy as it has ever been my misfortune to know a sleeping place to be.⁷⁴

S.P. from Hertfordshire had no concerns about the employers' point of view and complained that 'well-arranged, home-like bothies' were 'like high wages in gardens, few and far between'.⁷⁵ He had a litany of complaints from the lack of a good housekeeper, to the shortage of beds, and the only bathroom 'the stove tank with perhaps enough water in it to cover your ankles, if it is filled by what falls off the roof'.⁷⁶

The most common complaints about bothies were regarding living conditions. Gardeners criticised accommodation which flooded, or which was difficult to get to:

‘To reach my room which served both as kitchen and bedroom, I was obliged to enter the stable and climb a ladder to a trap-door above’.⁷⁷ One bothy was:

...at the extreme end of a long row of sheds abutting the vinery walls and facing north, through a stoke hole, through the mushroom house, a tool place and another shed.....A corner room, low lean-to roof, a miserable bed with conglomeration of clothes, the sheets as black as the black coverlet.⁷⁸

A lack of running water was felt very strongly. Very few bothy gardeners, even at the end of the century seemed to have had basic washing and toilet facilities. A shortage of furniture led to some men sharing beds and chairs.⁷⁹ An example of the sparseness of furnishing is shown by the list of items in the Lodge at Streatham Hall. These included an iron fender and ash pan, a meat safe and bench in the kitchen, a wooden table and stool in the main room and two wardrobes in the bedroom.⁸⁰ There was little privacy, especially for study or when someone was ill.⁸¹ J. asked, ‘How can a man be expected to study in an ill-ventilated, ill-lighted, ill-heated bothy or all three?’⁸²

In order that gardeners’ work time should not be cut short through undertaking domestic duties, many estates paid a woman to come in to care for the single men living in bothies. She cooked breakfast and a midday meal, and was responsible for basic cleaning and laundry of bed and household linen. Laundry was a perk of many servants’ wages.⁸³ Mrs Marley (1875), Mrs Coles (1878), Mrs Crocker (1878) and Mrs Couch (1901), wives of gardeners, were variously employed for cleaning at Streatham Hall, being paid 1s 3d per week from the garden account, and Mrs Roberts was paid 5s a week in 1901, but it is not known whether they were actually cleaning for bothy gardeners or not.⁸⁴

One of the most frequent complaints was about the food. Not the fact that bothy gardeners often had to provide their own provisions, but about the women who cooked for the men:

It is easy to buy good food for ready money, but not so easy to get it decently cooked by the bothy domestic, generally some poor old body that has served her time sweeping up leaves and pulling weeds in the garden, and has got too old for the job and is sent into the bothy to clean up in a sort of way and to spoil the food. When they are supplied by such food-spoilers, is it to be wondered at that young gardeners wear a worried and hungry appearance?⁸⁵

It was not surprising there were complaints: Ann Tanton was 77 when she was ‘cooking in kitchen garden’.⁸⁶ The system of using an older woman as bothy cook seems to be universal and was apparent in bothies in France as well as all over Britain.⁸⁷

However, not all men had a woman to come in and cook for them. C.J.H. wrote from Cheshire that his bothy cook was ‘a boy who knows as much about cooking as cooking knows about him. He is allowed one hour to prepare dinner’.⁸⁸ J.M.B. thought it was ‘up to the men to make the bothy comfortable.... But that the men could take turns being allowed time off to cook for the rest’.⁸⁹ However, another gardener argued against this view saying ‘Men don’t want to spend their time looking after the bothy, cleaning up after themselves, as their days are short enough already’.⁹⁰ A fear also expressed was that when a bothy was an example of good accommodation that there might be an expectation of unpaid overtime from the owner or head gardener: ‘he [the bothy inhabitant] does not complain knowing his bothy life is comfortable’.⁹¹

The correspondents also complained about the rules of living in the bothy and of having their living quarters inspected and fines imposed if not sufficiently tidy.⁹² Bothy rules included having to be in by a certain time of night usually 10 o’clock. No friends or women were allowed to visit. Bothy men were required to refrain from making a noise and were not allowed to sing.⁹³

Arthur Hooper wrote about the rules of bothy living imposed by those who shared accommodation, or by a foreman or head gardener. These encompassed social living and included the need to share everything from the cost of food to facilities. Dividing up the bothy duties was part of the bothy law. Gardeners were responsible for cooking and cleaning up after their evening meal (in their own time). Other duties included fetching in coal and wood, lighting fires and keeping them burning, cleaning and refuelling oil lamps. Sometimes these duties would be shared between the men, or they took it in turns to undertake ‘bothy duties’ on a rota basis.⁹⁴

Despite the fact that some correspondents to *The Garden* may have exaggerated poor bothy conditions, it seems that the editors took the letters seriously enough to say:

...we fear that the discomforts prevailing in many bothies are fairly represented...such conditions cannot fit a young fellow for his work and must be a bad influence on forming his character and habits.⁹⁵

As they were loud in their complaints, gardeners were equally clear in what they would like in an ideal bothy. These included:

... a suitable housekeeper ... a capable middle-aged married woman from some neighbouring cottage, well acquainted with the needs of working men who could come in daily to attend to the necessary details of cleaning and cooking.⁹⁶

A bathroom was the most popular demand as J.M.B. commented, 'legally and morally a gardener has just as much right to have his house made comfortable and sanitary as any other worker'.⁹⁷ Somewhere to read and study, with books to assist their learning, was also in demand:

...a good library is essential. True, we have a good and cheap weekly horticultural press, but the gardener of ambition takes higher flights, and he must become acquainted with the theory and practice as described by the ablest horticultural authors of the day!⁹⁸

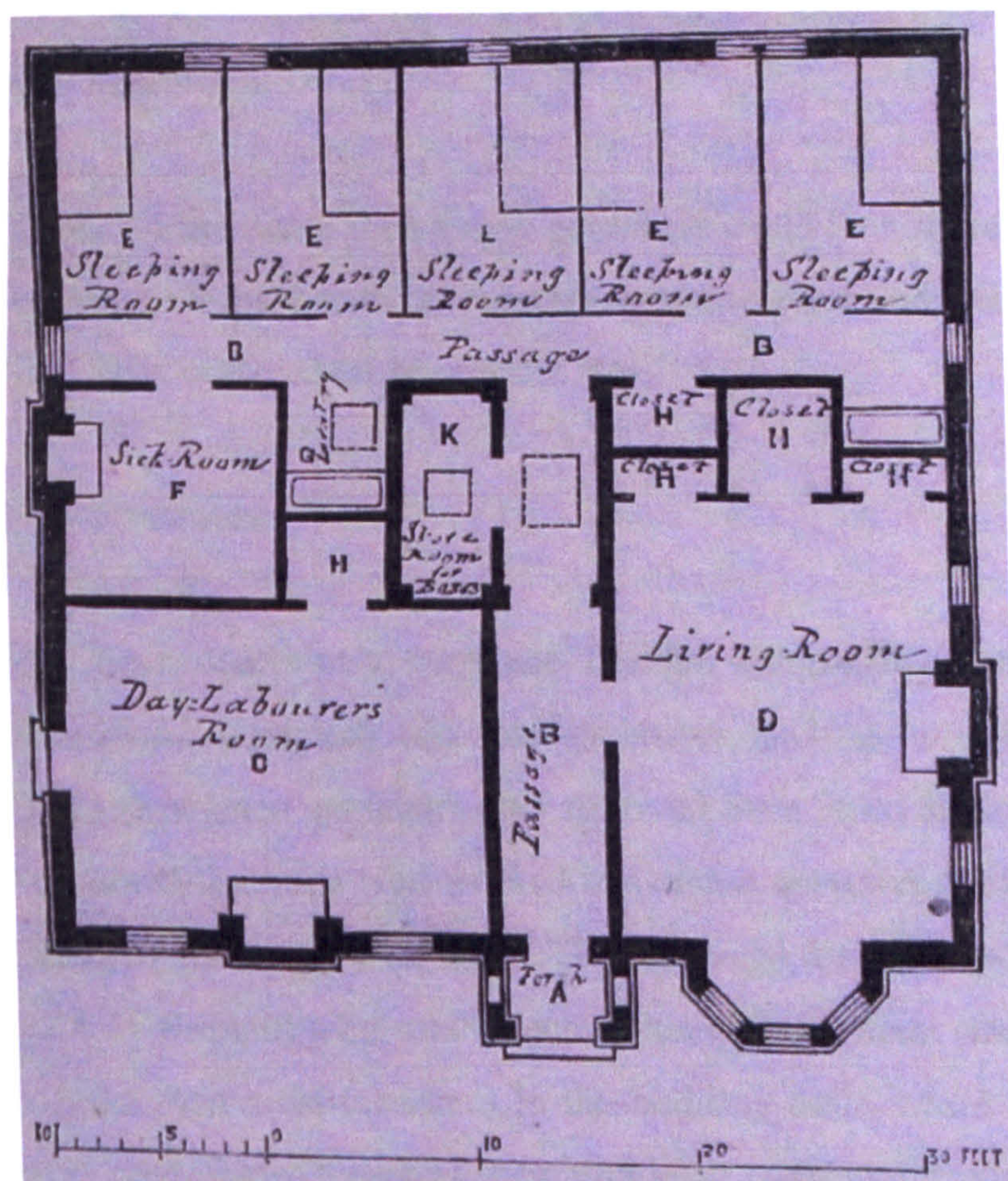
One correspondent requested 'a teacher one evening a week to give lessons in botany, drawing, chemistry, land surveying' and similar.⁹⁹ As has been seen in Chapter Two, this was a provision in some gardens, but obviously, not available to all. Requests were also made for leisure facilities. These included provision of a cricket pitch. A frequent demand was for a meeting room where lectures could be held and where the men could meet with friends or gardeners from other bothies in the area.¹⁰⁰

Bothy men received an allowance for fuel and vegetables as part of their wages. They supplemented their food with a bartering system with estate staff, or by poaching after dark to supplement their meals with rabbits, pheasants and duck. The gamekeepers turned a blind eye in return for fruit and vegetables. This system worked with the dairyman, where eggs and cream were swapped for garden produce, and with the kitchen staff where flowers and hothouse fruit were exchanged for apple pies, ham and bottled fruit. Wild mushrooms were also collected to supplement bothy meals.¹⁰¹

Census returns show that at Bicton, single gardeners were housed in lodges with between three and six men sharing accommodation. Castle Hill had a bothy house in the gardens which housed five gardeners in 1851 and six trainees aged between 17 and 27 in 1891. There were also bothies at gardens of any size and importance such as at Bystock Court, Haldon House, Oxton, Powderham Castle, Eggesford, Knightshayes Court and Sidbury Manor. At Maristow the garden bothy, which backed onto the glasshouses, was still lived in in 2003.¹⁰² The youngest gardener in the bothy at

Knightshayes in 1891 was Frederick Sowden aged 15. He shared accommodation with Peter Barnes, 27, John Green, 22 and Ernest Tucker 20. Frederick came from Witheridge which was only nine or ten miles from Knightshayes, but other young gardeners had travelled much further. Sydney Day, Thomas Hudson and Henry Faulkner all aged 19, came from Oxford, Ireland and Surrey to work at Bystock, Bicton and Oxton.¹⁰³ Homesickness must have been a problem for those youngsters who lived far away from home, although the companionship of their peers may have helped alleviate this.

Figure 3:6. Plan of the Young Gardeners' House at Wimbledon Park



Source: *The Garden* 13.01.1872, 175.

With good reason bothies came to have a mixed reputation among gardeners. Some men liked the independence and companionship of living in a bothy and when they advertised for a position would state 'bothy preferred' or 'bothy not objected to'.¹⁰⁴ However, while bothies provided much needed accommodation, many were very primitive places indeed and must have influenced a gardener's decision to stay in one household or to move on. There were some good bothies such as the one at Wimbledon

Park illustrated in Figure 3:6. David Taylor Fish, who acknowledged how poor accommodation could affect a gardener's attitude to work, commented, 'place young men in such a house as here set forth and the chances are that their conduct will be, or will become worthy of it'.

The bothy system reflected the attitude of owners to their gardeners where they were little more than economic units. Staff indoors frequently wore livery or uniform which identified them with the household. Gardeners however, were expected to remain in the background and complete their work unobtrusively. The head gardener was the only member of staff to be visible to family and visitors. Money was spent firstly on plants and their needs such as accommodation in glasshouses. The needs of young gardeners was a secondary consideration.

If there was no bothy on the estate then single gardeners could be billeted with the head gardener and his wife, or lodged with other estate workers. Most married gardeners and labourers lived in nearby cottages on or near the estate.

Remuneration of Gardeners

Gardeners' wages were notoriously poor and Loudon campaigned for improvement through his *Encyclopaedia*, journals and through letters, such as his complaint to *The Times* in 1839 that journeymen gardeners only received from 9s 0d to 12s 0d a week.¹⁰⁵ He had previously noted that men who worked in London nurseries could receive from 2s 0d to 2s 6d per day (12s to 15s a week).¹⁰⁶ The campaign for better pay was taken up by others such as I. P. Burnard who was incensed that a journeyman gardener who was much better educated than most labourers in the building trade, could only command half their wages. He maintained a carpenter or bricklayer could earn from 5s a day.¹⁰⁷

Throughout the nineteenth century Devon gardeners were paid between 1s and 3s per day. The lowest wages were at Portledge in North Devon in 1802, and the highest (from 1872), at Streatham Hall in Exeter.¹⁰⁸ Wage details have been found from at least one source, for the whole of the nineteenth century. Estate records provided the most information, some covering a number of years. For example, the Escot *Account of Garden Labour* ran from 1858 to 1874; Endsleigh garden wages books detailed pay of garden staff from 1818 to 1843, and from 1897 to 1919.¹⁰⁹ Maristow records run from

1800 to 1872.¹¹⁰ Other useful archives include those of Widdicombe and Kitley which cover the 1880s and 1890s.¹¹¹ Advertisements for gardeners' situations sometimes included wage details. In one example, in 1880, a 'useful man' sought a situation with a wage of 9s to 12s per week.¹¹² Another advertisement for a young gardener, with more than four years experience, who sought a new position, requested 'wages about 13s with bothy etc'.¹¹³

Research based on these accounts demonstrate that men's wages did not alter substantially from the early 1800s until the middle of the 1860s. At the beginning of the century men's wages were unstable but were usually from 1s 6d to 1s 8d per day. There was then a long period of relative stability where they remained at 1s 8d, apart from a dip to 1s 6d during 1816 and 1817. From 1865 men at Maristow were paid 1s 11d a day (11s 6d a week) during the winter months and 2s daily (12s weekly) in summer. Previously they had been paid 1s 8d per day (10s per week), with increases when labour was scarce (or when prices were high) for example, before the end of the Napoleonic Wars. At the end of the war there was a surplus of labour on the market, coupled with an influx into the country of men from Ireland, which resulted in wages being reduced to 1s 4d per day (8s a week). Loudon had commented in 1828 that 'the supply of labour, of all descriptions, far exceeds the demand. Every nursery is stocked with gardeners in want of situations...'¹¹⁴ He used this dire situation to warn men who were 'not reading gardeners' that they could never expect to rise much higher than common country labourers.¹¹⁵

One reason why the garden staff at Streatham Hall were paid better wages than those of their counterparts in the country was because they did not live in subsidised cottages, and were therefore responsible for paying their own rent to landlords in the city. The estimated rent for a labourer's cottage was 3s a week the equivalent of 6d per working day.¹¹⁶ Most of the men who worked in this garden lived in the same parish, that of St David's in Exeter. This also meant there was competition for work from the railway. Married garden labourers, who earned between 13s 6d and 14s 6d per week at Castle Hill, paid an annual rent for their cottages of between £2.12s and £3.18s, the equivalent to 1s and 1s 6d per week.¹¹⁷ This was one third or one half of rents in urban areas.

Figure 3:7 shows the average wages of garden staff in Devon paid during the nineteenth century. In 1807 labourers at Saltram were paid between 7s and 9s a week.¹¹⁸ From

about 1830 until the 1860s most gardeners in the county were paid 10s a week, this was the same as an agricultural labourer. The weekly rate gradually increased from 10s to 11s 6d then up to 15s a week in the 1880s. By this date journeymen earned about 1s 6d more per week than ‘ordinary agricultural labourers’.¹¹⁹ More people had moved into urban areas searching for work, reducing the number available to work on the land. Wages had to rise to combat competition for labour from the towns. The urban expansion of Exeter and Plymouth provided plenty of work for those in the building trade who, as noted above, were better paid than gardeners. Even estate masons and carpenters received between 3s and 4s 6d more per week than gardeners.¹²⁰

Figure 3:7. Average daily wages of garden staff paid per decade in Devon during the nineteenth century

Date	Men	Foremen	Boys	Women
1801-1810	1s 7d		7d	7¾d
1811-1820	1s 11d	1s 11½d	9½d	7¾d
1821-1830	1s 6d	1s 11½d	11d	7¼d
1831-1840	1s 7½d	1s 9d	8¼d	8d
1841-1850	1s 7½d	2s 1¼d	10d	8½d
1851-1860	1s 8d	1s 10¼d	8d	9d
1861-1870	1s 11½d	1s 11¼d	7½d	7¾d
1871-1880	2s 5½d	2s ¾d	10½d	8d
1881-1890	2s 6¾d	2s 8½d	11¼d	6d
1891-1900	2s 5¾d	3s 0d	1s	

Source: Wages database based on estate account books (see Bibliography).

A comparison of men’s weekly wage across some of the more important gardens in the county show there was little difference between the estates, nor with examples from Somerset and Cornwall. Although not representative of the whole county it can be seen that wages at Nynhead were similar to those in Devon, whereas those at Pentillie were slightly above (see Figure 3:8). However, although staff at Enville Hall in Staffordshire (not included in the chart) were paid 2s a day from 1839, twenty years earlier than in Devon, the majority were only paid 2s 6d a day or 15s a week in 1900.¹²¹ This suggests there was more competition for labour from the factories in Staffordshire in the 1830s, which had abated by the end of the century.

It was not until after the First World War that wages increased appreciably at Endsleigh. This was due in part to the shortage of labour caused by the loss of so many men during the war, and the unwillingness of some men to return to gardening. Those remaining

had to work much harder to complete the tasks previously undertaken by a much larger staff. From the 1890s the garden staff increased from eleven to a peak of 25 in 1910. At the beginning of 1914 there were 24 gardeners, most of whom were earning 2s 10d a day. The men left the garden gradually throughout the war, until by the end of 1918 there were only seven men left earning 4s 8d a day. These included Samuel Friese who, ‘resumed his work being discharged from [the] army’ in July 1916. By the end of March 1919 numbers had increased to ten men who earned 5s 2d a day.¹²²

Figure 3:8 Comparison of men’s wages in shillings per week

Date	Ends	Escot	Kitley	Maristow	Powd	Saltram	Streat	Nyne Som.	Pent Con.
1801				9s		8s			
1806				10s					
1811				12s					
1816	10s			10s					
1821	10s			9s		9s			
1826	10s			9s					
1831	10s			9s		10s		9s	
1836	10s				10s				
1841	10s				10s				
1846					10s				
1851			10s		10s				
1856		9s			10s				
1861				11s 6d	11s				12s
1866				11s 6d	11s				12s
1871		12s		12s	11s		18s		15s
1876		12s		14s	11s		18s	13s	15s
1881					11s		18s	13s	15s
1886					18s				15s
1891			15s						
1896	15s	15s							

Key: Ends: Endsleigh; Powd: Powderham; Streat: Streatham Hall; Nyne, Som.: Nynehead, Somerset; Pent Con.: Pentillie, Cornwall.

Source: Wages database based on estate accounts.

Journeymen who lived in a bothy frequently received some form of additional perks which included coal, oil, fruit and vegetables.¹²³ Gardeners who lived as servants ‘in the house’ were given bed, board and food as part of their wages. Garden boys at Endsleigh and Maristow earned 2s 6d (12½p) to 3s (15p) a week, little more than pocket money. Apprentices earned as little as one shilling a day. Servants at Castle Hill received beer and board wages on top of their annual salary.¹²⁴ However, gardeners who lived in their own houses or bothies where they were self-sufficient had no need for board wages which would have been paid when the family was away from home.

A single man living in a rent-free bothy would have had to use a proportion of his wage to pay for his share of food, but could still end up richer than a labourer who had to pay for a cottage and support a family. Garden labourers earned the same as any other day labourer, between 1s 6d a day up to 2s 6d by the end of the century.¹²⁵ No allowances were made for specific gardening skills; they were considered to be similar to husbandry skills.

John Cameron, a gardener of Grove Lane, Camberwell, considered that poor wages and working conditions were the fault of 'the young men themselves':

... young gardeners from the country, who, whenever trifling difficulties come in their way, throw up their situations with the view of bettering themselves through the medium of advertisements in the public prints or by soliciting favours from nurserymen.¹²⁶

He suggested that gardeners should engage themselves for a year initially, then for several years further to enable them to 'look around them with pleasure at the fruits of their industry, perseverance, and talent'. It would be at that point, he maintained, that they could then think to ask for an increase in wages.¹²⁷

There was very little change in the daily wage for women across Devon until 1889 when 1s a day was recorded for Kitley.¹²⁸ Previous to this the normal daily rate had been 8d. Although women in the garden at Powderham were paid 10d a day from 1847, it was still 8d at Kitley in 1854 and at Escot until 1871.¹²⁹ In common with men, women in north Devon were paid less than their counterparts in other areas of the county receiving 6d per day at Portledge in 1846 and the same at Stevenstone in 1863.¹³⁰ It has been suggested that women were paid less than men and boys because they started their day's work later than men and finished earlier, since they had a family to care for.¹³¹ To date, no evidence has been found to either support or refute this. Market women were paid 1s a day because they had to leave for the market early in the morning. They were also responsible for handling money which ultimately was paid to the estate to be offset against the garden account.¹³²

In times of hardship women's wages might also be reduced by a penny or two, this happened at Buckland Abbey in 1802 and 1803, at Maristow from 1818 to 1825 and at Saltram women's wages only, were reduced by 2d per day to 6d in 1822.¹³³ Somerset

women were paid a similar wage to those in Devon in 1832 and 1842.¹³⁴ However, those who worked at Pentillie in Cornwall received 1s a day more than twenty years before those at Kitley, and at Enville Hall, women were paid 8d a day from 1830 to 1842, but Mrs Barker was paid 1s 3d in 1900.¹³⁵ Where women worked on the farm as well as in the garden they were paid according to the task undertaken. For example at Horswell, weeding, apple picking and planting potatoes were paid at 7d per day, but more strenuous jobs such as hay-making and lifting potatoes were paid at 8d and 1s per day respectively.¹³⁶ Although women's wages did increase in the latter part of the century the difference between women's income and men's became greater.

Depending on their age and position in the garden boys were paid the same or more (usually 1d or 2d a day) than women. The wage of apprentices would gradually rise in line with their age, experience and length of service. For example Henry Dunn, an under-gardener at Escot, was paid 1s 4d in 1867 when he was aged 16. His wages rose in 2d increments until he was earning 1s 10d by 1871 when he left.¹³⁷ Richard Littlejohn of Endsleigh earned as little as one shilling a day (6s a week), although at Streatham Hall apprentices were paid between 1s 8d and 2s a day. Littlejohn was accommodated in Endsleigh house so received full board and lodgings in addition to his wage.¹³⁸

Foremen were paid more than the men with whom they worked. Sometimes the difference was quite marked as with Charles Langworthy at Maristow who earned 8d per day more than his men.¹³⁹ More usually there was just a penny or two difference. The experience gained from the position was important as being a foreman could lead to becoming a head gardener, even if it was only in a small establishment. Foremen were a step above ordinary journeymen; tuppence a day extra amounted to a shilling a week, which meant he could rent a house, get married and start a family if he wished.

Arthur Hooper complained that as a working gardener he had not received overtime pay for work outside his normal hours.¹⁴⁰ However, in Devon, it appears that some overtime was paid, either for a special task such as filling the ice house or for destroying wasps nests. A one off payment, which often included cider or beer, was made for heavy work such as taking in the orange trees at Saltram, or particularly messy jobs such as pond-cleaning or chimney sweeping.¹⁴¹ At other times it was the equivalent of an hourly or daily rate. Saltram gardeners in June 1822 and Kitley men in June 1854 were paid 2d an hour overtime. Pro rata this was a better deal for the Saltram men because their daily

wage was 1s 8d whereas at Kitley it was 1s 10d.¹⁴² Overtime was paid at Escot for watering and cutting grass in the summer.¹⁴³ Prior to an exhibition in Exeter in 1863, the men were required to work additional hours in preparation, and for this they were paid 4½d extra for 3d overtime, in other words, they were paid time and a half. Edward Bartlett was also paid 1s a week extra for acting as a foreman for two weeks.¹⁴⁴ Albert Ballhatchet, a foreman at Streatham Hall, was regularly paid 2s for working Sundays. This was one shilling less than he received for a weekday, but may have been because he worked a shorter day on the Sunday.¹⁴⁵

All the garden staff at Streatham Hall were given an annual Christmas box of five shillings and occasional presents throughout the year, usually of one shilling each.¹⁴⁶ Gardeners on other estates also received bonuses from time to time. Those at Escot received a new years gift from Sir John Kennaway of nine shillings each on January 8th 1873, ten shillings each on January 26th 1875 and January 11th 1876.¹⁴⁷

On some of the more prestigious estates in the county sick pay was given to some gardeners, but was not common. At Escot in April 1863, John Temple was paid his full wage although he was off sick.¹⁴⁸ It is hard to determine why William Whiting at Endsleigh and Samuel Solomon at Escot received full pay, while ill, while others were only paid a third of their normal wage. At Bicton, Eli Hart, Albert Troake, William Smith, Thomas Gooding, Mark Hitchcock and George West received sick pay at varying times through the year.¹⁴⁹ The amounts paid were from 6s 6d to £1.0s.4d. Sick pay was linked to wages, but it is also probable that it was linked to length of service.

Although nationally, there had been a decrease in working hours, the gardeners at Kew in 1891 only received a wage of 18s 0d a week for 66 hours work, which included Sunday working. One reason given for paying a lower wage was that the men could benefit from sick pay and £1 superannuation a year. Sick pay however, was not paid until three years had been served and then only amounted to fifty per cent of wages. A gardener had to have served for ten years before he received three quarters of his pay and fifteen years before he was entitled to superannuation.¹⁵⁰

Retirement pay was more often or not a perk of the head gardener and there are not many records of ordinary working gardeners receiving a pension. Where it was paid, like sick pay it was related to the length of service. Betty Judson, the only woman found

to date, to receive a pension from a garden account and Robert Cundy at Maristow received only 4s a month. It is not certain that Betty's money was paid to her in her own right or as a result of husband's work as was the gratuity of 10s a month paid to Jane Lang at Sydenham in 1893. Jane was the widow of a gamekeeper.¹⁵¹ William Roberts Baskerville at Streatham Hall was paid a pension of 8s a week in 1878 (he had received 18s when working) and William Knight (aged about 71) at Endsleigh received 12s a week in 1897.¹⁵² William Olver (aged about 75), also at Endsleigh only received 1s 8d, a week. Both had worked in the gardens for many years, Knight since at least 1851 and Olver since the 1860s. The pension not only reflected their long service, but also their position in the gardening hierarchy as Knight was listed in the census as a gardener whereas Olver was only a garden labourer.¹⁵³ Many gardeners were allowed to stay in estate cottages and could be called upon to help out in times of need. Salaried gardeners like Thomas Dowell at Powderham and Richard Willis at Mamhead were able to purchase an annuity which guaranteed them an income upon retirement.¹⁵⁴

Working Conditions

Gardeners, both educated and unskilled, worked long hours. This was in common with other agricultural workers. Charles Vancouver in 1808 suggested that labourers in Devon worked from seven in the morning until noon, then from one pm to either five o'clock or six o'clock depending on the season, a total of between fifty-four and sixty hours a week.¹⁵⁵ It would appear that many gardeners worked longer hours than this. In 1843 James Barnes at Bicton stated that when he had joined the garden, his labourer's hours were from six am until five pm with half an hour for breakfast and an hour for lunch, a total of nine and a half hours. A normal working day for a gardener in Devon would have been ten and a half hours, but at Bicton an hour was allowed for the men to return home to work their own gardens.¹⁵⁶

In 1876 Thomas Trook, aged 73 made a complaint about the food he received at the workhouse in Exeter. He said he had to work in the garden, helping the gardener, from 7.30 in the morning until six o'clock at night with an hour and a quarter off from noon until 1.15. He was upset that whereas the gardener had a meal of bread, meat and cider, he only had workhouse fare which he felt was insufficient for the hours of work he was undertaking.¹⁵⁷ Whether this complaint was justified or not, it does give an insight into the hours worked and the food that some gardeners received as part of their wages.

One of the complaints of young gardeners was that due to the long hours worked they had neither the time, nor the energy for any form of additional education. One gardener moaned, 'the long working hours during the spring and summer months allow the gardener to have practically no leisure'.¹⁵⁸ Complaints were also linked with pay. 'I consider journeymen gardeners are about the hardest worked and poorest paid young men in the country, considering that most of them have to work almost every day in the year and in several that I could name from 6 am to 6 pm'.¹⁵⁹ In 1872 *The Gardener's Magazine* stated:

The usual hours for working in gardens are from six a.m., to six p.m. in the summer, and from daylight to dark during the winter months, with half an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner. In many gardens forty minutes are allowed for breakfast during the summer season. Head gardeners are also usually allowed time for tea in the afternoon during the long days. In some gardens the men leave an hour or so earlier on Saturdays than on other days.

Already, by this date those who worked in the building trade had negotiated a half-day on Saturday.¹⁶⁰ Meal breaks varied from garden to garden and season to season. Arthur Hooper mentions that in summer he had to 'work an extra half an hour each day for twelve weeks to make up for the time lost during the past winter, when it had been too dark for work at half-past four'.¹⁶¹

Gardeners worked a six day week, 52 weeks of the year. Days off included most Sundays, unless they were on duty, Christmas day, and Good Friday or a Fast Day. At Endsleigh all the gardeners had a day off, paid, for Jubilee day in June 1897. By the end of the century some gardeners, in line with other professions, had their hours reduced to a five and a half day week. *The Times* reported that arrangements had to be made for earlier payment of wages to gardeners in Hampton Court gardens on Saturdays as they now finished work at 1.30 on Saturday.¹⁶²

Rules and Regulations

It was common for the working gardener, as with many other servants to be governed by a series of rules and regulations which many regarded as a nuisance and an imposition. From the perspective of the head gardener, however, these were seen as a motivator and a set of standards to work to. Hung in the tool-house at Chatsworth, there was a painted board '*Rules to be observed by all persons working on these Premises, Master and Men*'. These listed the fines 'to be paid to the gardener, on or before the Saturday night' following the misdemeanour (see Figure 3: 9).¹⁶³ Whether James Barnes

was aware of these rules which were probably in place from the 1830s is not known, but following his appointment at Bicton he imposed two sets of similar rules, one for the plant department, one for the kitchen garden department (see Figures 3:10 and 3:11). He extended the number of rules to 24 for the plant department and 25 for the kitchen garden. These two sets of rules were very similar and changed the appearance of the gardeners as well as their behaviour.¹⁶⁴

Figure 3:9. Rules hung in tool room at Chatsworth

" Rules to be observed by all persons working on these Premises, Master and Men.

" I. For every tool or implement of any description not returned to the usual place at night, or returned to a wrong place not appointed for it, or returned or hung up in a dirty or unfit state for work, the forfeit is 3d.

" II. For every heap of sweepings or rakings left at night uncleared, forfeit 3d.

" III. Every person making use of bad language to any person on these premises shall forfeit, for each and every such offence, 6d.

" IV. Every person found drunk on these premises shall forfeit one shilling; and, if he be in regular employment on the premises, he shall be suspended from his employment one day for every hour he loses through drunkenness.

" V. Every person who shall knowingly conceal or screen any person offending, shall be fined double the amount of the fine for the offence he so conceals, in addition to the fine of the offending party.

" VI. All forfeits to be paid to the gardener, on or before the Saturday night following. If any person working regularly on the premises fail to conform to the above rules and regulations, the gardener shall be at liberty to stop his fines from his wages. Further, should any foreman or journeyman fail to comply with the above rules and regulations (with a knowledge of them,) the gardener shall be at liberty to seize and sell his tools or part of them, to pay such fines, in one month from the time the offence was committed.

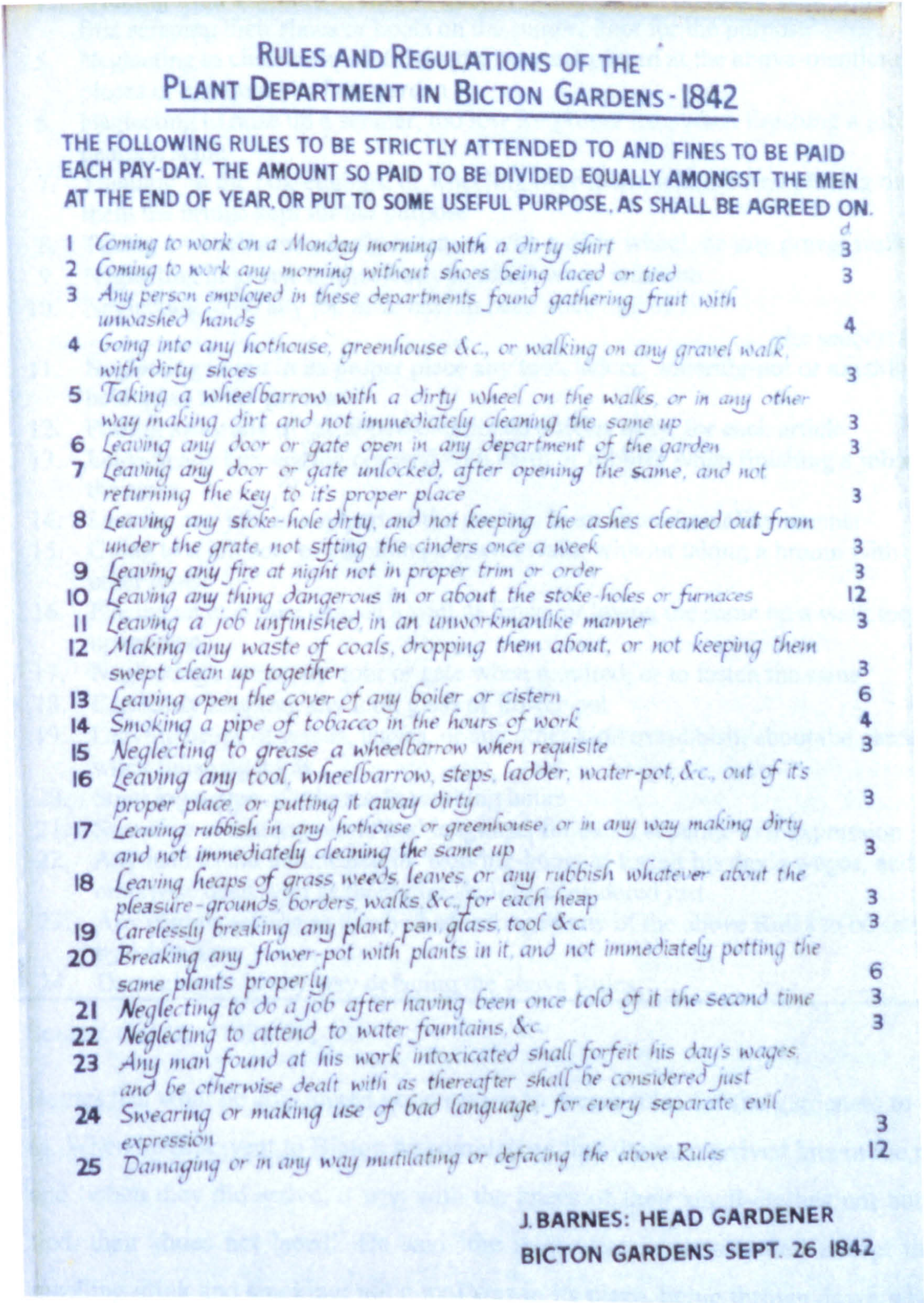
" VII. All fines to be expended in a supper, yearly, to all the parties who have been fined."

Source: Andrew Jackson Downing, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America* (1844), Fourth edn (New York, 1859), 500.

Bicton's Rule number 1 and 2 of the rules for the Plant Department covered the gardeners' personal appearance, rule 3 their hygiene. Cleanliness and tidiness were important as all areas of the gardens were open to inspection by the gentry and their visitors. Rubbish left lying about could also harbour pests and diseases. There had to be no unsightly areas for visitors to view. Health and safety were paramount instilling confidence and efficiency. Care of expensive tools and equipment was also important. Behaviour was monitored, no smoking or drinking were allowed. The largest fines were

for rule 10 ‘leaving anything dangerous in or about the stoke-holes or furnaces’ and 25, for ‘damaging or in any way mutilating or defacing the above rules’ (see Figure 3:10).¹⁶⁵ The latter would have been more than mere vandalism, it would have shown disrespect to the head gardener.

Figure 3.10. Rules and Regulations of Bicton Plant Department



Source: Rules first printed in GM (1842) Photograph: C. Greener.

Figure 3:11 Rules and Regulations of Bicton Kitchen Garden

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF BICTON KITCHEN-GARDEN ¹⁶⁶		
The following Rules to be strictly attended to, and the Fines to be paid each pay-day.		
Rule		d.
1.	Coming to work on a Monday morning with a dirty shirt	3
2.	Coming to work any morning without shoes being either laced or tied	3
3.	Any person employed in these gardens found gathering fruit with unwashed hands	4
4.	Walking from any border, bed, or quarter of the garden on to the walk without first scraping their shoes or boots on the scraper kept for the purpose	3
5.	Neglecting to clean away dirt from the scrapers placed at the above-mentioned places or any quarter of the garden	3
6.	Neglecting to raise up a scraper, too low for proper use, when finishing a job near the same	3
7.	Treading on the box-edgings, or wheeling over them, without first placing over them the bridge kept for the purpose	3
8.	Taking a wheelbarrow badly laden, or with a dirty wheel, on any gravel walk	3
9.	Neglecting to grease a wheelbarrow-wheel when requisite	3
10.	Neglecting to do any job after having been once told of it	3
	the second time	6
11.	Neglecting to put in its proper place any tool, ladder, watering-pot or anything belonging to the garden	3
12.	Putting away any of the above-mentioned articles dirty, for each article	3
13.	Leaving any box-edging covered with earth or rubbish when finishing a job near the same	3
14.	Leaving any job, in any part of the garden, in an unworkmanlike manner	3
15.	Going to a job near or adjoining a gravel walk, without taking a broom with other tools	3
16.	Placing an iron rake against a wall or fence, or laying the same on a walk teeth uppermost	3
17.	Neglecting to shut any door or gate when required, or to fasten the same	3
18.	Carelessly breaking any tool, glass or flower-pot	3
19.	Leaving heaps of weeds, leaves, or any other kind or rubbish, about the garden when finishing a job	3
20.	Smoking a pipe of tobacco in working hours	4
21.	Swearing or making use of bad language, for every separate evil expression	3
22.	Any man found intoxicated in working-hours to forfeit his day's wages, and be otherwise dealt with as thereafter shall be considered just	
23.	Any dispute arising as to who had infringed any of the above Rules to be settled by arbitration	
24.	Damaging or in any way defacing the above Rules	12

Source: *GM* 18, (1842), 562-563.

Barnes had what he considered good reason to create rules for the gardeners to conform to. When he first went to Bicton he complained that the men arrived late in the morning, and ‘when they did arrive, it was with the knees of their small-clothes not buttoned or tied, their shoes not laced’. He said ‘the men were never satisfied except they were guzzling drink and smoking; not a tool was in its place, being thrown down where a job was finished and all confusion and disorder in every corner, coals lying about in every

place through which they had been wheeled, flower pots thrown together, broken and unbroken, clean and unclean'.¹⁶⁷

Having introduced the rules despite some stiff opposition from his foremen on the estate, he later maintained 'the difference in the industry, cleanliness, happiness and contentment amongst my men is truly astonishing.' It seems his men had lived up to his high expectations as:

They are always in time of a morning, as clean as I can expect of a labourer, merry whistling, singing, going to work as if they were taking an interest in doing good and always knowing where to put their hand on any tool that is wanted, but I still live in hopes of seeing further improvement here in every way'.¹⁶⁸

Number VII of the Chatsworth rules stated 'All fines to be expended in a supper, yearly, to all the parties who have been fined'.¹⁶⁹ Bickton's rules stated 'The amount so paid to be divided equally amongst the men at the end of the year, or put to some useful purpose, as shall be agreed upon'.¹⁷⁰

Tools

Having served an apprenticeship, a man became a journeyman whereupon he would have to purchase his own tools, unless provided for in the garden where he worked. The minimum required would have been:

...a light handy spade, a shovel, rake with iron teeth, hoe, three-pronged fork, dibber, or setting-stick, line and reel, usually called a skillet, wheelbarrow, baskets, trowel, a pair of shears, scythe, hay-rake, hook, ladder, besom, or broom, beater, garden-roller, turving-iron, hatchet, and hammer'.¹⁷¹

These would have cost the equivalent of six months' work, and it seems unlikely that he would have carried all the tools from one workplace to another.

Tools were needed for different activities, therefore they were divided into tools for cultivation, which encompassed spades, forks, hoes, rakes and hand tools such as trowels. Pruning equipment included knives, saws, secateurs and loppers. Lawns needed to be mown, edged and swept. A grindstone was considered to be:

...almost indispensable in a garden... in many cases, only half the amount of work can be performed with a blunt tool that can be done more perfectly with a sharp one in the same time and with less exertion.¹⁷²

There were watering cans of all shapes and sizes, various watering engines, which could be pulled along paths and water pumped in a spray over the garden (see Figure 3:12). Hosepipes, made of gutta percha, were developed by Henry Bewley from 1845. Although heavy and needing wheeled hose-holders they reduced the time needed for watering. Soon sprinkler attachments and water jets were added.¹⁷³ The other important aspect of cultivation was pest control, and for this purpose there were syringes, dusting boxes and brushes. In Loudon's *Encyclopaedia* he has no less than twenty-one pages of 'Implements of Gardening' and covers every item a gardener would possibly find a use for, from tally sticks to tree transplanters.¹⁷⁴ It is highly unlikely that the majority of gardeners would use most of this equipment.

Figure 3:12. Green's Garden Engine



Source: Robert Thompson, *The Gardener's Assistant: A Practical and Scientific Exposition of the Art of Gardening in all its Branches* New edn William Watson, ed., (London, 1900), 187.

The care and maintenance of tools was an important issue:

Men work better when in good health than when in bad, and like manner, with good clean tools more and better work is accomplished than is possible when they are either rusty or blunt or rickety.¹⁷⁵

Regular payments were made to the local smith for making and repairing garden tools and for sharpening blades.¹⁷⁶ John Blatchford, the smith at Milton Abbot, sent an invoice to Endsleigh in 1829 for work done for the garden to include repair of three garden spades, three hoes, two pairs of shears, a fork and 'laying they toes of an Evil'. The latter, a three pronged fork, used for moving manure. Rakes were provided with

new teeth and a barrow with an iron hoop for the wheel. He supplied a new garden hoe and a new pair of shears.¹⁷⁷ In 1894 the Kitley gardener bought new tools worth £1.2s.9d. The most expensive items were 'water pots', two for 8s 6d and a further pair for 6s 6d.¹⁷⁸ From the 1870s mass production meant that many of these items were purchased from local ironmongers and nurserymen.¹⁷⁹ Throughout the nineteenth century new tools were invented and traditional ones were made stronger and more durable, or adapted, with the aim to make the labourer more effective and to cut back on man hours and consequently garden costs:

It is an admitted principle in political economy that, in proportion as the amount of produce can be increased by a reduction of labour, so great is the proportionate increase of wealth to the producer.¹⁸⁰

Head gardeners invented and adapted the equipment they used in their everyday lives, taking new ideas with them if they moved from garden to garden. George Fleming, at Trentham designed 'a machine for destroying weeds, moss, lichens, &c., on gravel-walks and court-yards' which was basically a boiler on wheels filled with salt water. This reduced the amount of hand-weeding needed, although care had to be taken when spraying the edges of the path.¹⁸¹ Salt for weeding gravel drives was still being recommended in 1870.¹⁸² Barnes at Bicton invented the crane-necked hoe for weeding and a fan broom for sweeping the walks. The hand hoes came in a variety of sizes to be used for different purposes.¹⁸³ Inventions were written up in horticultural books and journals. They included a range of items such as canvas protection for wall fruit trees, methods of pest control, the benefits of mulching and double glazing for greenhouses.¹⁸⁴

Wheelbarrows, spades and forks became lighter in weight which meant that a man had more energy to dig a larger area in one day. An unintentional side effect was to make physical work easier for the gardener. David Thompson suggested that, 'besides the advantage of more work being performed, it is always the case, that with a well-adapted tool of a superior description, the work is better done'.¹⁸⁵ Improvements in the materials used ensured knives and shears cut larger stems more cleanly and lasted longer without sharpening.¹⁸⁶ Secateurs were developed from pruning shears with a spring attachment and sharp blades. They did not however, replace a gardener's knife which he carried with him at all times and which became a personal object, sometimes paid for by himself.¹⁸⁷ Initially, secateurs were seen as items to be used by ladies as recommended by Jane Loudon, but were eventually adopted by gardeners as a useful addition to their tool selection.

Galvanised wrought-iron fittings and garden twine made tying fruit trees to walls easier and eventually replaced nails and ‘shreds’, strips of leather or cloth, prepared by the gardener in the winter months.¹⁸⁸ Ladders, gurneys and grape bottles were used for harvest and storage of produce. Various hampers and baskets were purchased and repaired and used to transfer produce to the house or the market from the kitchen garden. People dependent upon the gardening industry included matt makers, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, painters, ironmongers, tool makers, basket makers, carriers and the people who supplied packaging materials.

Nurserymen supplied seeds, shrubs and trees, but trees were expensive and difficult to move when large, so small saplings were planted which took several years to mature. Although ‘Capability’ Brown had moved mature trees with a machine nicknamed the ‘yanker’ it was not until William Barron developed his tree mover that large trees could be guaranteed to survive a move. Instead of wrenching the trees from the land often causing damage to the roots, Barron’s method involved cutting round the roots and lifting the tree complete with a huge root-ball. The tree was then transported and placed on top of the ground and the earth built up around the root ball.¹⁸⁹ This method created an instant garden and revolutionized planting with mature trees.

New inventions helped make many late nineteenth century gardens less time-consuming to maintain, an important consideration as the wages of the gardener had begun to increase in the 1870s rising above two shillings a day (see page 124). For example in 1871 Shirley Hibberd recommended the use of ‘a handsome stone moulding, or its equivalent in some imitative material’ to avoid ‘the time spent in clip-clip-clipping’ grass verges.¹⁹⁰

Lawnmowers

Scythes, sharpening stones, brooms and rollers were all part of the equipment needed for grass cutting which was of particular importance in the west country with its mild climate and high rainfall and where the grass grows continuously throughout most of the year. One of the most important inventions to affect gardeners was the lawn-mower. Edwin Beard Budding developed, in 1830, the first mower after watching a rotary cutter shearing the nap of cloth in the woollen industry. A license to produce lawn-mowers was sold to Ransomes of Ipswich in 1832. In Scotland similar experiments with machines were taking place and by 1842 Alexander Shanks of Arbroath had developed

a five roller horse-drawn mower. Early mowers were very heavy and cumbersome. They were not suitable for small areas of lawn, nor could they cope with wet grass. Two men, or one man and a pony, were required to pull and guide the mower, but they had a significant impact on the time and labour needed to cut large lawns as Mr Curtis, foreman of the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens pointed out:

With two men, one to draw and another to push, it does as much work as six or eight men with scythes and brooms; not only in mowing but sweeping up the grass, and lifting it into a box; performing the whole so perfectly, as not to leave a mark of any kind behind.¹⁹¹

Charles McIntosh estimated that during ten years of using the largest mowing machine available, pulled by horse and guided by a man, that there had been a saving of twelve men during the mowing season'.¹⁹² It was possible to use a scythe on wet grass which meant that mowing could be done early in the morning before the family were about, whereas most mechanical mowers could only cope with dry grass, so had to be used later in the day. This had the effect of shortening the working day, as it was no longer possible to mow early in the morning and late in the evening.¹⁹³ An enthusiastic American gardener proclaimed of the Shanks' lawn mower that 'between the hours of eight o'clock in the morning and four o'clock in the afternoon, two men and a boy could cut the same amount of grass which previously had taken nine days to complete'.¹⁹⁴ It was not only men's lives that were affected by lawnmowers, their use also took work away from garden women who had traditionally swept up after the skilled scythe men.

Mowers were treated with distrust by many gardeners until late in the century. It was not until 1861 when Thomas Green patented the self-sharpening blade that they became more popular among gardeners, even then they were noisy and cumbersome to use.¹⁹⁵ In Devon mowing was one of the major jobs that went on throughout a large part of the year, mostly without lawn-mowers to help and it is not known when the earliest machine was used in the county. The earliest, found to date, was purchased for Powderham Castle garden at a cost of £7.10s in August 1865.¹⁹⁶ In 1869 ironmongers Wippell & Sons of High Street Exeter, advertised a range of mowers which included Barnard and Bishops's 'Noiseless' and Samuelson's, Brown's and Green's machines.¹⁹⁷ This suggests there was a market for the new machines.

In 1831 a mowing machine made by the Phoenix Foundry near Stroud cost between seven and ten guineas, which was an expensive outlay when the cost of a man was

between 1s 6d and 1s 8d per day.¹⁹⁸ If the saving in manpower was accurate, and assuming the grass was cut once a fortnight through the summer, this could have been recouped within the first couple of years. A 21" Runaway was purchased from G. H. Breese in Plymouth for the Strodes of Newnham Park in 1895 at a cost of £5.10s, this price included a fifteen per cent discount; and a mowing machine for the garden at Blackpool was purchased from J. J. Tolman, at a cost of £4.5s.6d, the following year. Mowing by scythe, especially on long wet grass, continued to be the chosen method of grass cutting, being quieter and less obtrusive. By the 1870s the Archimedean lawnmower from America became popular with amateur gardeners because it would cut both wet and dry grass and therefore was useful for villa gardens where 'there is only a small piece of lawn'.¹⁹⁹ The ten and twelve inch 'Young Ladies' Mower for the croquet lawn' cost three and four guineas respectively, with an additional cost of 7s 6d for a grass box, from Williams and Company in London. Machines were 'delivered free at all railway stations'. No charge was made for the packing cases 'which are most convenient for storing the Machine during the winter'.²⁰⁰ The largest machine advertised was the twenty inch for 'a man and boy' at a cost of eight guineas. Spare parts were also available from the same company.²⁰¹

Although no mention is made of a lawnmower at Escot, a halter and boots were bought in December 1870, and, throughout the summer of 1876, a boy was paid for donkey drawing.²⁰² By the end of the century prices of smaller mowers had tumbled and a nine inch 'Speedwell or 'Runaway' could be purchased for just £1 or £1.10s respectively.²⁰³ This meant that even small gardens could have a lawn which became the focus of leisure activities. A smoothly mown lawn could be used for sports; clock golf, croquet, lawn tennis and badminton were a few of the games played. Summerhouses were built to store sports equipment and garden furniture, or to give somewhere to sit to watch a game or have a picnic.

Chemical Aids

Although it is tempting to assume that nineteenth century gardeners were organic growers in tune with nature, in fact they killed birds, insects, toads, rabbits and anything they thought was in competition for their crops or which would destroy their plants. 'Vermin' appears to be a term used to cover any pest, two, four or six legged. Guns were used to shoot rabbits and birds. The rat and mole-catcher were important members

of the garden staff and paid for each animal caught or poisoned.²⁰⁴ Mice were major pests. One remedy, from 1841, entitled *To Destroy Mice*, reads as follows: 'Fry a sheet of brown paper (the coarser the better) in any grease: this the mice will eat and it will destroy them. This is safer, cheaper and easier than any trap'; the cost of traps was about 8d each.²⁰⁵ This remedy must have been tried by some, but how it worked is not known, or whether any substance other than grease was added to ensure the demise of the mice. Wasps were enticed into traps with treacle and garden staff were paid up to two shillings for the removal of each nest.²⁰⁶ By the time Arthur Hooper was a gardener in the twentieth century it was recognised that some so-called 'pests' also had a beneficial role which resulted in some wasp nests being retained each year in order that the wasps helped keep the population of aphids down as well as providing food for birds.²⁰⁷

Woodlice were trapped using bait of dried apple under an inverted flower-pot; to capture ear-wigs, the pots were filled with straw. Slugs were encouraged to feed on fresh grains from the brew-house then covered in lime. Shirley Hibberd favoured natural remedies such as boiling water, or a pot of brine to destroy captured woodlice, slugs and snails.²⁰⁸ Until other methods were used, caterpillars had been picked off by hand, usually by a host of women and children or garden boys and this was still a method resorted to when an infestation was deemed too great to be dealt with by sprays.

Syringes, fumigators and dusting machines were used to treat pests and diseases on plants utilizing home-made pesticides, some quite effective. Tar, vinegar, soap, sulphur, tobacco and lime were used at Kitley and Maristow; soap ashes and soot were used as washes, as powders, singly or mixed together.²⁰⁹ Tobacco powder was:

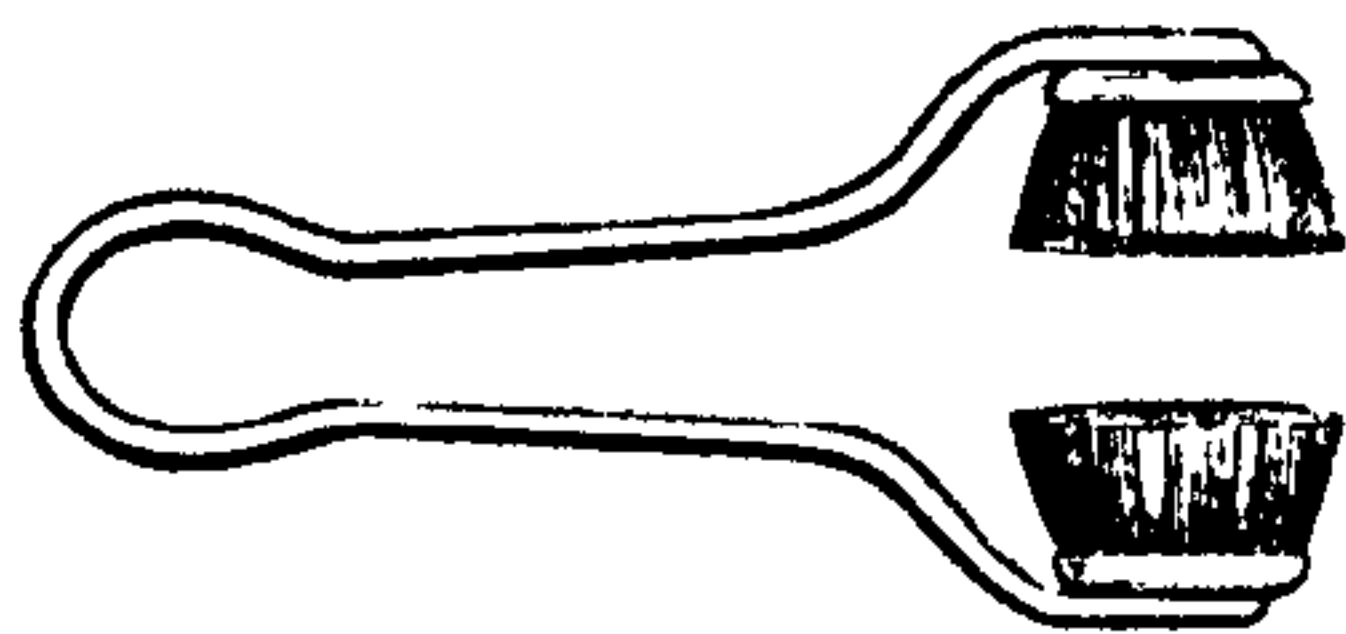
cheap, convenient, and cleanly in use. Harmless to vegetation, but most deadly to aphids and thrips....dusted on the leaves of the infested plant when they are damp with dew, and should be washed off twelve hours afterwards'.²¹⁰

Nicotine was a favoured poison and tobacco plants were grown, dried, chopped and mixed with about one third part of tobacco paper. This was used as a wash for fruit trees, as a powder to rid plants of greenfly and to fumigate greenhouses.²¹¹ The latter could prove risky to the gardener if he entered the house too early after fumigation. There was also a suggestion in *The Gardener* that in order to kill the caterpillar of goat moths, chloroform should be used.²¹² Spirit of turpentine was used as an insecticide and Bordeaux mixture, a combination of copper sulphate and slaked lime was used as a fungicide. New advances saw combinations of chemicals which could be lethal to man

as well as insects such as soft soap mixed with mercury, cyanide, hellebore and pure nicotine. Three pounds of arsenic was purchased 'to kill weeds' and strychnine was used to kill rats and mice at Maristow.²¹³ Fowler's Insecticide and Aphis wash could be purchased from nurseries.²¹⁴ By 1893 the danger of cyanide was being recognised and it was advised that its use should be discontinued. Instead a mixture for destroying wasp nests was recommended which included powdered sulphur, powdered saltpetre and black gunpowder which sounds equally dangerous.²¹⁵

Some less harmful methods were used. A correspondent in *The Gardener* recommended catching ladybirds in March and placing them on calceolarias and cineraria in the greenhouse as a cure for greenfly.²¹⁶ An alternative method was to use an aphis brush (see Figure 3:13). Made of plastic and steel, this was developed to brush off the aphids on roses without harming delicate buds.

Figure 3:13. An aphis brush



Source: Robert Thompson, *The Gardener's Assistant: A Practical and Scientific Exposition of the Art of Gardening in all its Branches* New edn William Watson, ed., (London, 1900), 216.

Weeds were mostly destroyed by digging, hoeing and hand pulling, although Barnes at Bickton argued against this work. He wrote, 'I make it a rule never to have any hand-weeding done, except in the gravel walks: as I am well convinced there is much mischief done by incautious and thought-less people weeding amongst crops'. As seen above he advocated the use of hoes 'to keep the surface of the earth, clean, open and healthy'.²¹⁷ Chemicals for weed-killing were adopted because of their speed and effectiveness. They helped keep a garden neat and tidy and were particularly useful where there was a shortage of labour. Sulphate of copper, otherwise known as blue vitriol, became popular for weeding paths. Mixed in proportion of '1lb. to six gallons of water', great care had to be taken not to allow it to extend beyond the verges of the walks as it destroyed vegetation of all kinds.²¹⁸ The advent of chemicals for weeding led to a reduction in the need for hand-weeders; as a result women were not required so frequently in the garden.

Gardeners' Tasks

Every month of the year was busy for the gardeners. In May, at Endsleigh, the men were involved in preparing flower beds, sowing annuals in the borders, planting dahlias and bedding plants, potting begonias in the greenhouse, mowing grass and hoeing footpaths. Weeds were cleared, climbing plants tidied and tied neatly to supports. In the kitchen garden, vegetables were planted; asters too, to provide cut flowers for the house. Peas and beans were 'sticked' and fruit trees given washes of insecticide. There is a sense of the garden being prepared for the summer as the tennis court was cleaned and made ready for use, all the paths were cleaned, weeded and re-sanded where necessary. Mowing was undertaken almost every day.²¹⁹

By June, the watering had begun. The glasshouses were shaded from the sun, preparations were made for winter vegetables to be planted. Strawberries were gathered for preserving. By the end of July, seeds were collected and cuttings were taken to propagate new stock for the following year. At the end of September orange trees were taken into the glasshouse for protection, bedding plants were lifted to be over-wintered. Pots were washed and stacked, the boilers prepared for winter. Azaleas and rhododendrons were lifted, the soil they had been bedded in was replaced and the plants reinstated. To all their other jobs, leaf collecting for hot-beds was added in October and November. Storehouses were filled with potatoes and carrots. Garden furniture, hand glasses and lights from frames were carefully cleaned and stacked away.²²⁰

Surprisingly, one of the busiest months of the year was November. Root crops were lifted, washed and carefully packed in clamps of earth and straw to be stored for the winter months. Broccoli were stored whole in cellars. The remains of old crops and dying plants were removed from the garden in order to trench and manure the ground for the following year. Celery was earthed up, rhubarb and seakale were transplanted into forcing houses. Grapes were cut in bunches and stored in grape bottles containing charcoal and water. On wet days, glasshouses were cleaned and whitewashed and future cropping plans were drawn up.²²¹ There was a rhythm to the work which was repeated at the same time every year and which was dependent on the social calendar of the owners and when they would be in residence.

Summary

Despite the advent of lawnmowers and new chemical mixes reducing the need for man power, the number of working gardeners increased throughout the nineteenth century to satisfy the demand in what had become a labour intensive industry. Men had to be prepared to undertake a variety of tasks, many not directly related to gardening.

Far more women worked in gardens than are represented by official sources, however by the end of the century the number of labouring women declined as they were not needed for weeding nor to collect grass cuttings, some of the more menial jobs traditionally undertaken by women were given to men and boys. At the same time middle-class women had begun to compete for work with journeymen.

The position of a jobbing gardener was the most precarious unless he could get regular work. Not only did he have to provide his own tools, but regular work was at the best uncertain and expectations of his capabilities was high. Many jobbing gardeners were little more than casual labourers, others were highly skilled in one particular aspect of gardening such as pruning or grafting.

Single men who made up a large contingent of trainee gardeners moving from one garden to another in search of experience and promotion received accommodation, usually in a bothy, as part of their wages. Much of this was of poor quality, dark, damp and with few or no facilities. Young men living together were probably less demanding of good quality housing. It was often as older men looking back that they became more indignant about poor living conditions where the plants they cared for were better housed than themselves. Not all bothies were bad, some were clean wholesome places, but in themselves could exert a form of moral blackmail on young gardeners to regulate their behaviour and work practices. Another form of motivation, seen as a restriction by some men, were rules and regulations created by head gardeners, not just for the bothies in which they lived, but also in their daily lives. However, the discipline they instilled enabled gardeners to take a pride in their appearance and to identify with their garden.

Many inventions and developments made gardeners' lives easier and saved both time and physical effort, for example, the ice-making machines of Mr Reece in the 1870s removed the necessity of filling the ice-house each winter.²²² New chemicals were used

in the garden, some of which like arsenic, nicotine and mercury used for insecticides were poisonous and could be positively injurious to the health of the gardener. The use of manures also changed with scientific and industrial developments. Bone crushing mills were set up near ports to take advantage of imported bones, and guano proved to be one of the most popular of the new manures. Although local material was still used for convenience, gardeners no longer had the necessity to dredge streams for silt and gravel or scour local beaches for lime-rich sand; nor with the advent of the water closet was night soil so frequently used.

Mechanical lawn-mowers had one of the biggest impacts on a gardener's working life, cutting man, and woman, hours needed to mow and sweep lawns. However, new inventions did not always lead to a reduction in the numbers of employed male gardeners. Gardens which incorporated topiary and bedding out systems were very labour intensive. Jobbing gardeners were needed for the heavier tasks in villa gardens and the numbers employed in nurseries and market gardens increased as the businesses competed to supply their growing numbers of knowledgeable customers.

Although by the end of the century, wages had increased, and the workload had become lighter, there were still complaints about long hours and poor pay.²²³ Low wages were blamed on the lack of any union or body to represent gardeners as a whole, and this in turn was blamed on the apathy of the gardeners themselves.²²⁴ This was a national problem, not just a regional one and was partly linked to a surplus number of gardeners, but also to a traditional pay and employment structure which neither the industry, in the shape of nurserymen and head gardeners, nor employers saw any reason to change. As Samuel Badman stated in 1872:

Vexatious mistakes often occur on the part of employers from a misconception of what a gardener really is. Frequently he is supposed to be simply an educated labourer, or a very correct-going machine who will do exactly what he is told, though it may be planting gooseberry-bushes with their heads downward....But a gardener is something more than a machine; he is, or should be, a professional man, and as such claims to be treated in that light.²²⁵

¹ J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London, 1822), 1199.

² Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1336.

³ See for example, Devon Record Office (DRO) 346M/E9 Buckland Abbey and Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (PWDRO) 874/3/40, 54 Maristow.

⁴ *Census (1891) Vol III, ages, condition as to marriage, occupations, birthplaces and infirmities* (PP 1893-4, cvi), 88.

⁵ *Census (1851): population tables, pt II: ages, civil condition, occupations and birth-places of the people* (PP 1854, lxxxviii vol I).

⁶ *Census (1851): population tables*, (PP 1854, lxxxviii vol 1); *Census (1861): Population tables, vol II ages, civil condition, occupations and birthplaces of the people* (PP 1863, liii, pt 1); *Census (1871): population tables, vol III: population abstracts: ages, civil condition, occupations and birth-places of people* (PP 1873 lxxi, pt 1); *Census (1881) Vol III, ages, condition as to marriage, occupations and birth-places of the people* (PP 1883, lxxx); *Census (1891) Vol III* (PP 1893-4, cvi); *Census (1901) summary tables, areas, houses and population; also population classified by ages, conditions as to marriage, occupations, birthplaces, and infirmities* (PP 1903, lxxxiv).

⁷ *Census enumerators' returns (Census) PRO RG12, Heavitree District 1 & 2, 1891; Kelly's Directory* (1893).

⁸ These are listed in the *Census enumerators' returns*, but without qualifiers such as 'domestic' or 'non-domestic'.

⁹ *Census* PRO RG12-13 Bishops Tawton and Topsham, 1891, 1901; PRO RG14 Barnstaple and Topsham, 1911 *Census Household Original Pages for Frank Langdon of Countess Weir and William Coleman of Congrams Row, Barnstaple*.

¹⁰ Solomon Baker, working at Escot in 1851; *Census* PRO HO 107 Devon, 1851 [CD]; *Census* PRO RG9 William Cole, a garden labourer at Northam in 1861.

¹¹ These figures are from the database of private gardeners and show the age of the gardener at the first reference to an individual.

¹² DRO 1508M/Devon/Estate/Labour Books V1.

¹³ *Census* PRO RG11 1881 [CD].

¹⁴ 306 grooms and gardeners, plus 72 coachmen and gardeners have been listed on the database; See also, *Devon Weekly Times (DWT)* 22.12.1871, 4a; *Exeter Flying Post (EFP)* 19.07. 1876, 4a; *The Times* 09.09.1884, 12e.

¹⁵ *Census* PRO RG11 1881, PRO RG 9 1861, PRO RG13 1891.

¹⁶ DRO 3610Z and add/1.

¹⁷ DRO Z19/20/36-7; *Census* PRO RG11-13 1881, 1891, 1901.

¹⁸ DRO 3610Z and add/1.

¹⁹ DRO 3610Z and add/1-2, 4.

²⁰ Robert Thompson, *The Gardener's Assistant: A Practical and Scientific Exposition of the Art of Gardening in all its Branches* Vol 1 New edn ed. by William Watson (London, 1900), 216; Arthur Hooper, *Life in the Gardeners' Bothy* (Suffolk, 2000), 32-33.

²¹ DRO 961M/M/E34.

²² DRO 3610Z and add/1-2, 4; *EFP* 21.01.1885, 7c.

²³ DRO 96M/add/E34.

²⁴ DRO 3610Z and add 1; DRO 961M/M/E34.

²⁵ DRO 3610Z and add 1.

²⁶ DRO 7140 (96M) *Bicton Rental and Account* 1842, F147.

²⁷ Malcolm Dunn, 'The Relations Between Gardener's and Their Employers', *JRHS* 17 (1894), 86-95, 87; Mr S. Heaton, 'Gardeners - Past, Present, and Future', *JRHS* 20:1 (1896), 40-52, 40.

²⁸ Dunn, 'Relations', 87.

²⁹ *EFP* 6.10.1880, 3e.

³⁰ *Torquay and Tor Advertiser* 2.01.1846, 1a-b; 18.08.1846, 4b.

³¹ Monica Mary Brewis, "The Garden That I Love": Middle Class Identity, gender and the English Domestic Garden 1880-1914. Ph.D Thesis University of Brighton, (2004), 95.

³² DRO 346M/F230-1, July 1759.

³³ DRO 316M/EA/22.

³⁴ *Census* PRO RG11 Moretonhampstead and Honiton, 1881; *EFP* 3.12.1873, 3c.

³⁵ DRO 1292M/Accounts 4-6; *EFP* 28.11.1877, 3f.

³⁶ Archibald McNaughton, 'On the Life of a Jobbing Gardener of Hackney', *GM* 1 (1826), 24-26, 25.; Henry Burgess, *The Amateur Gardener's Year-Book* (Edinburgh, 1854), 330.

³⁷ Yvonne Cuthbertson, *Women Gardeners: A History* (Denver, 1998), 32, 35, 48, 75.

³⁸ Heaton, 'Gardeners', 49.

³⁹ Eliza Towel and Martha Cornelius of Dawlish both worked with their fathers. Lily Westlake won prizes at Hartland and Clovelly Cottage Garden Society see *North Devon Journal* 7.08.1890, 2d.

⁴⁰ *The Times*, 13.05.1901, 10f.

⁴¹ *The "Borough" Pocket Guide to Ivybridge* (Cheltenham, 1919), 22.

⁴² *Ivybridge* 23-4.

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- ⁴³ Pers communication Ann Meredith.
- ⁴⁴ *The Times* 21.07.1898, 12d, 25.07.1899, 9d.
- ⁴⁵ Peter King, *Women Rule the Plot: The Story of the 100 year Fight to Establish Women's Place in Farm and Garden* (London, 1999), 16-20.
- ⁴⁶ King, *Women Rule*, 11-20.
- ⁴⁷ Edward Higgs, 'Occupational censuses and the agricultural workforce in Victorian England and Wales' in *Economic History Review* XL VIII, 4 (1995), 700-716; *A Clearer Sense of the Census: The Victorian censuses and historical research* (London, 1996); 'Women's occupations and work in the nineteenth-century censuses', *History Workshop Journal* 23 (1987), 59-80.
- ⁴⁸ *Census (1851): population tables; Census (1881) Volume III, ages*.
- ⁴⁹ PWDRO 874/2-3; 874/3/11.
- ⁵⁰ *Census* PRO HO107 Exeter St Thomas, Heavitree and South Tawton, 1841.
- ⁵¹ *Census* PRO HO107 Devon 1851 [CD].
- ⁵² *Census* Devon 1841-1901.
- ⁵³ *Census (1881) Volume III, ages*.
- ⁵⁴ Higgs, 'Women, Occupations and Work', 60-62.
- ⁵⁵ *Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* PP (London, 1843) xii, 27.
- ⁵⁶ Charles Vancouver, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Devon* [1808], repr. (Newton Abbot, 1969).
- ⁵⁷ Bridget Hill, *Women, work and sexual politics in eighteenth-century England* P'back edn (London, 1994), 91.
- ⁵⁸ Joyce Burnette, 'The wages and employment of female day-labourers in English agriculture, 1740-1850', *EcHR* LVII:4 (2004), 664-690, 556.
- ⁵⁹ DRO 316M/EA/20.
- ⁶⁰ Edward Higgs, 'Occupational Censuses', 700-716.
- ⁶¹ Source: gardener's database.
- ⁶² PWDRO 69/M/7/28.
- ⁶³ See for example, Ann Potter at Escot. DRO 961M/M/E34.
- ⁶⁴ PWDRO 874/2/2.
- ⁶⁵ DRO 1508M/Devon/Estate/Labour Books V10.
- ⁶⁶ DRO 316M add 3/FA5.
- ⁶⁷ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 71.
- ⁶⁸ Editorial, *The Garden*, LXI, (1902), 65.
- ⁶⁹ AGC, *The Garden* LXI 22.02.1902, 117.
- ⁷⁰ AIB *The Garden* LXI 08.03.1902, 163.
- ⁷¹ RB, *The Garden* LXI 22.02.1902, 117.
- ⁷² RB, *The Garden* LXI 22.02. 1902, 117.
- ⁷³ RB, *The Garden* LXI 22.02.1902, 117.
- ⁷⁴ Alexander Somerville, *The Autobiography of a Working Man* (London, 1848), 149; See also Charles McIntosh, *The Book of the Garden Vol 1. Structural* (Edinburgh & London, 1853), 486.
- ⁷⁵ SP Herts, *The Garden*, LXI 22.02.1902, 117.
- ⁷⁶ SP Herts, *The Garden*, LXI 22.02.1902, 117.
- ⁷⁷ GCJ Berks., *The Garden* LXI 15.03.1902, 179.
- ⁷⁸ Experientia Docet, *The Garden* LXI 15.03.1902, 179.
- ⁷⁹ SP Herts, *The Garden* LXI 22.02.1902, 117; A Foreman, *The Garden* LXI 01.03.1902, 146.
- ⁸⁰ DRO Z19/20/36.
- ⁸¹ *The Garden* LXI 01.03.1902, 145.
- ⁸² *The Garden* LXI 08.03.1902, 163.
- ⁸³ Five people were paid 'washing' money at Castle Hill. This amounted to 13s 3d a month for one, 8s 10½d each for the other four. DRO 1262M/E1/63.
- ⁸⁴ DRO Z19/20/36.
- ⁸⁵ SP Herts, *The Garden*, LXI 22.02.1902, 117.
- ⁸⁶ *Census* PRO RG12 St Giles in the Wood, 1891.
- ⁸⁷ AGC, *The Garden*, LXI 01.03.1902, 145.
- ⁸⁸ CJH, *The Garden* LXI 22.03.1902, 196.
- ⁸⁹ JMB, *The Garden* LXI 22.03.1902, 196.
- ⁹⁰ *The Garden* LXI 29.03.1902, 212.
- ⁹¹ GCJ Berks., *The Garden* LXI 15.03.1902, 179.
- ⁹² AGC, *The Garden*, LXI 01.03.1902, 145.
- ⁹³ JHC, *The Garden*, LXI 01.03.1902, 145.
- ⁹⁴ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 7.

- ⁹⁵ *The Garden* LXI 22.02.1902, 117.
- ⁹⁶ RB, *The Garden* LXI 22.02. 1902, 117.
- ⁹⁷ JMB, *The Garden* LXI 22.03.1902, 196.
- ⁹⁸ Quo, *The Garden* LXI 22.03.1902, 196.
- ⁹⁹ Experientia Docet, *The Garden* LXI 15.03.1902, 179.
- ¹⁰⁰ JHC, *The Garden*, LXI 01.03.1902, 145.
- ¹⁰¹ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 129.
- ¹⁰² Pers communication. There were two bothies at Maristow, one in the garden, which backed onto the glasshouses and another near the Middle Lodge.
- ¹⁰³ *Census* PRO RG12 Withycombe Raleigh, 1891; PRO RG10 Bicton, 1871; PRO RG9 Kenton, 1861.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Gardener's Chronicle (GC)* 20.08.1887; *DWT* 19.04.1895, 4a; *DWT* 21.06.1895, 4a.
- ¹⁰⁵ J. C. Loudon, 'The Effect of a General Penny Post on Periodical Literature', *The Times* 09.05.1839, 5d.
- ¹⁰⁶ J. C. Loudon, 'Education of Gardeners' *Gardener's Magazine (GM)* 1 (1826), 356.
- ¹⁰⁷ I. P. Burnard, 'On the Remuneration of Gardeners', *GM* 1 (1826), 141-144, 141.
- ¹⁰⁸ NDRO 2239B add8/122; DRO Z19/20/36.
- ¹⁰⁹ DRO 961M/M/E34. DRO L1258M/ V4/4; DRO L1258M add 9/E3/1-10; DRO 3610Z and add/1-4.
- ¹¹⁰ PWDRO 874/1/1, 11-14, 17-20, 27-28, 31-38; 874/2-11; 874/24/1-2.
- ¹¹¹ DRO 867B/E9/4/3; PWDRO 74/uncatalogued; 74/404.
- ¹¹² *EFP* 25.08.1880, 4a.
- ¹¹³ *DWT* 21.06.1895 4a.
- ¹¹⁴ *GM* 4 (1828), 440.
- ¹¹⁵ *GM* 4 (1828), 441.
- ¹¹⁶ *The Gardener's Magazine* 8.06.1872, 284.
- ¹¹⁷ DRO 1262M/E1/63.
- ¹¹⁸ PWDRO 69/M/6/155.
- ¹¹⁹ A.L. Bowley, 'Rural Population in England and Wales: A Study of the Changes of Density, Occupation, and Ages', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 77:6 (1914), 597-652, 645.
- ¹²⁰ DRO 1262M/E1/63, carpenters paid 19s 6d, painters and masons paid 18s a week.
- ¹²¹ Enville Hall Archives, Garden Labour Books 1826-1843, 1900.
- ¹²² DRO 2610Z and add 4.
- ¹²³ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 8.
- ¹²⁴ DRO 1262M/E1/63.
- ¹²⁵ DRO 316M add3/FA12/45; 1508M Devon/Estate/Labour Books V11; 1262M E1/63.
- ¹²⁶ John Cameron, 'On the Conduct of Gardeners and their Employers', *GM* 3 (1828), 156-7, 156.
- ¹²⁷ Cameron, 'On the Conduct', *GM* 3 (1828), 156-7, 156.
- ¹²⁸ PWDRO 74/uncatalogued.
- ¹²⁹ DRO 1508M Devon/Estate/Labour Books/V1; PWDRO 74/729; DRO 961M/add/E34
- ¹³⁰ NDRO 2239B/12/1a; DRO 96M/Box 2/6
- ¹³¹ Burnette, 'Wages', 675.
- ¹³² PWDRO 874/3/9; 74/404.
- ¹³³ DRO 346M/E10; PWDRO 874/3/27; PWDRO 69/M/7/28.
- ¹³⁴ Somerset Record Office (SRO) DD\SF 4533, Nynhead; SRO DD\P1/14/14, Somerton Erleigh.
- ¹³⁵ Cornwall Record Office (CRO) CY/1093 Pentillie; Enville Hall Archives Labour Books.
- ¹³⁶ DRO 316M add 3/FA5/4, 6, 7, 12, 15, 22, 24.
- ¹³⁷ DRO 961M/add/E34.
- ¹³⁸ DRO 3610Z and add/1; Z19/20/36-7.
- ¹³⁹ PWDRO 874/24/2.
- ¹⁴⁰ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 18.
- ¹⁴¹ PWDRO 69/M/7/28.
- ¹⁴² PWDRO 69/M/7/28; 74/729.
- ¹⁴³ DRO 961M/M/E34.
- ¹⁴⁴ DRO 961M/M/E34.
- ¹⁴⁵ DRO Z19/20/36-37.
- ¹⁴⁶ DRO Z19/20/36.
- ¹⁴⁷ DRO 961M/M/E34.
- ¹⁴⁸ DRO 961M/M/E34
- ¹⁴⁹ DRO 7140 (96M) *East Devon Cash Book* 1872-1877.
- ¹⁵⁰ *The Garden* 21.03.1891, 277.
- ¹⁵¹ NDRO B170 add/91.
- ¹⁵² DRO Z19/20/36.

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- ¹⁵³ DRO 3610Z and add/1: Census records for Milton Abbot.
- ¹⁵⁴ Castle C/2/7 Box 3 F136; DRO 867B/E8/1.
- ¹⁵⁵ Vancouver, *Agriculture*, 361-363.
- ¹⁵⁶ GM 18, (1842), 561.
- ¹⁵⁷ EFP 13.09.1876.
- ¹⁵⁸ GCJ, Berks, *The Garden*, 15.03.1902, 179.
- ¹⁵⁹ *The Garden* 29.03.1902, 212.
- ¹⁶⁰ *The Gardener's Magazine*, 13.01.1872, 14.
- ¹⁶¹ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 18.
- ¹⁶² *The Times* 20.06.1896, 10a.
- ¹⁶³ Andrew Jackson Downing, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America* [1844], 4th edn (New York, 1859), 500.
- ¹⁶⁴ GM 18 (1842), 562-563, 567.
- ¹⁶⁵ GM 18 (1842), 562-563.
- ¹⁶⁶ GM 18 (1842), 562-563.
- ¹⁶⁷ James Barnes, 'Art II, Bicton Gardens, their Culture and Management. In a Series of Letters to the Conductor', GM 18 (1842), 555-567, 557.
- ¹⁶⁸ Barnes, GM 18 (1842), 562.
- ¹⁶⁹ Downing, *Landscape Gardening*, 500.
- ¹⁷⁰ GM 18 (1842), 562-563.
- ¹⁷¹ Samuel and Sarah Adams, *The Complete Servant* [1825] Ann Haly ed. (Sussex, 1989), 171.
- ¹⁷² Thompson, *Gardener's Assistant*, 193.
- ¹⁷³ *The London Journal of Arts, Sciences, and Manufactures and Repertory of Patent Inventions* 31 (1847), 214.
- ¹⁷⁴ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 315-335.
- ¹⁷⁵ Thompson, *Gardener's Assistant*, 173.
- ¹⁷⁶ PWDRO 74/729; DRO 316M add 3/FA14/9.
- ¹⁷⁷ DRO L1258M/V4/4.
- ¹⁷⁸ PWDRO 74/404.
- ¹⁷⁹ DRO 316M add3/FA10, 13; PWDRO 74/404; PWDRO 874/24/2.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Annals of Horticulture and Year-Book* (1848), 334.
- ¹⁸¹ T. R., 'Destroying Weeds Upon Walks', *The Floricultural Cabinet, and Florist's Magazine* (1851), 232.
- ¹⁸² *The Gardener* (1870), 571.
- ¹⁸³ GM 19 (1893), 495-6, 46-47.
- ¹⁸⁴ *The Gardener* (1870), 37, 140, 286, 269-70, 336, 383, 526-7, 568.
- ¹⁸⁵ Thompson, *Gardener's Assistant*, Vol 6, 173.
- ¹⁸⁶ J. Loudon, *Gardening for Ladies* 7th edn (London, 1846), 120; Robert Hunt, 'A Treatise on the Progressive Improvement and Present State of the Manufactures' in *Metal II Iron and Steel* New edn (London, 1853), 44.
- ¹⁸⁷ Whereas, in most gardens, tools were supplied, knives were personal items and sometimes paid for by the gardener, for example on a note dated 7th February 1838 sent with a cheque to Alexander Pontey by W. R. Ilbert of Horswell, 'I have deducted for the two knives charged in January as the gardener finds them for himself', see DRO 316 add3M/FA16/41. In the majority of cases however, Jobbing gardeners had to supply their own tools.
- ¹⁸⁸ *The Gardener's Magazine*, 15.02.1873, 74.
- ¹⁸⁹ William Barron, *The British Winter Garden: Being a Practical Treatise on Evergreens; Showing Their General Utility in the Formation of Garden and Landscape Scenery, and Their Mode of Propagating, and Removal From One to Fifty Feet in Height, as Practised at Elvaston Castle* (London, 1852), 31-37.
- ¹⁹⁰ Shirley Hibberd, *Amateur's Flower Garden* (London, 1871), 12.
- ¹⁹¹ GM 7 (1831), 611.
- ¹⁹² Charles McIntosh, *Book of the Garden Vol II, Cultural* (Edinburgh & London, 1855), 779.
- ¹⁹³ GM 7 (1831), 611.
- ¹⁹⁴ *The Horticulturist and Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste* 5 (Philadelphia, 1855), 335.
- ¹⁹⁵ *The Journal of Horticulture, Cottage Gardener and Country Gentleman* New series 1 (1861), 301.
- ¹⁹⁶ DRO 1508M/Devon/Accounts/V58.
- ¹⁹⁷ EFP 28.04.1869, 4c.
- ¹⁹⁸ GM 7 (1831), 611; SRO DD\SF/4533; DRO 316M/EA/15-21.
- ¹⁹⁹ PWDRO 273/238 Newnham; *The Gardener* (1870), 228-9.
- ²⁰⁰ DWT 12.04.1872, 4; NDRO 2309 B/211/10.
- ²⁰¹ NDRO 2309B/211/10; DWT 12.04.1872, 4.

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- ²⁰² DRO 961M/M/E34.
- ²⁰³ DWT 26.07.1895.
- ²⁰⁴ PWDRO 710/198; Kitley gardens paid 1s each for mole traps in 1894 see PWDRO 74/375.
- ²⁰⁵ *The West Britain*, 19.05.1841.
- ²⁰⁶ PWDRO 74/729; Twenty nests were destroyed at Streatham Hall in 1873 see DRO Z19/20/36.
- ²⁰⁷ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 66.
- ²⁰⁸ Shirley Hibberd, *The Town Garden: A Manual for the Management of City and Suburban Gardens* 2nd edn (London, 1859), 188.
- ²⁰⁹ PWDRO 874/3/1 & 13; 74/729.
- ²¹⁰ Hibberd, *Amateur's Flower*, 272.
- ²¹¹ *The Gardener* (1870), 314, 840.
- ²¹² *The Gardener* (1870) 436.
- ²¹³ PWDRO 874/24/1-2.
- ²¹⁴ *Cottage Gardening* 4.05.1898, 23; Hibberd, *Amateur's Flower*, 272.
- ²¹⁵ *The Garden*, 19.08.1893, 176.
- ²¹⁶ *The Gardener* (1870), 140.
- ²¹⁷ James Barnes, 'Bicton Gardens, their Culture and Management – Letter xix Crane-necked Short-handled Hoes', *GM* 19, 1843, 495-497, 496.
- ²¹⁸ *The Gardener* (November 1870), 523.
- ²¹⁹ DRO 3610Z and add/1.
- ²²⁰ DRO 3610Z and add/1.
- ²²¹ DRO 3610Z and add/1.
- ²²² *Gardener's Magazine* 9.08.1873, 404.
- ²²³ At Kew, in 1895, four men received a wage of only 9s 4d a week, which was considered to be 'far below a living wage'. See *The Times* 31.05.1895, 6g.
- ²²⁴ *The Gardener's Magazine* 13.01.1872, 14.
- ²²⁵ Samuel Badman, 'Present Position and Future Prospects of Gardeners', *The Gardener's Magazine* 27.07.1872, 404.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Perfect Gardener

Introduction

Head Gardeners and Their Employers

The Role of the Head Gardener

The Single-Handed Head Gardener

Living Conditions of Head Gardeners – Marriage and Children

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Perfect Gardener

A Head Gardener in a large establishment is an individual of no little importance, and is usually a man possessing a considerable amount of practical knowledge and a fair education.¹

Introduction

Top of his profession, and the most important person in a private garden, was the head gardener. He had most certainly gone through years of training, including a lengthy apprenticeship, had gained experience through his time spent as a journeyman, or under gardener, in a variety of gardens and garden departments, both private and commercial and was confirmed in his position by his capacity for management. Although employed as servants, head gardeners to a large extent belonged in the professional section of workers. They were rarely at the top of the professional hierarchy, but part of those who 'reach much further down the social pyramid than ever landlordship or even business capital did'.² Most were well, if 'self' educated; they were articulate and influential. Their salaries placed them at the bottom of the middle class, but in many gardens they lived in substantial accommodation. It was rare that their wives worked, and most kept at least one indoor servant themselves. Although they lacked protective trade organisations, they attached themselves to horticultural societies where they rubbed shoulders with the gentry and aristocracy and where they could use their influence to determine the quality of produce grown and the education of young gardeners. They were often members of public bodies, becoming trustees of such organisations as local charities and had a paternalistic attitude, not only to their staff, but also to the poor in their neighbourhood. For example James Barnes started one of the first cottage garden societies in Kent, although he was denied the opportunity to do the same at Bickton.³

Loudon advised that owners, who were not garden experts, should be guided by nurserymen in their choice of head gardener as, 'very much of the comforts and pleasures which a private gentleman derives from his garden, and garden scenery, depends on the qualifications of the gardener which he employs to manage them'.⁴ Having reached the pinnacle of his profession, a head gardener was expected to have the authority to organise a garden. Although he had the autonomy to follow his own interests, his responsibilities were first and foremost to ensure a regular supply of fruit and vegetables to feed those who lived and worked on an estate. He also provided cut

flowers and posies, pot plants and flower decorations for the owner and his family, whether living at home or away, and kept and maintained prestigious gardens to a high standard, with items of interest for the appreciation of owners and visitors.

This chapter will show that head gardeners in Devon differed from their national counterparts in that there were fewer opportunities within the county to train and work in large prestigious gardens, although this was offset by the number of smaller estates and villa gardens which needed staff. Many of those who worked in Devon's estate gardens had a comparatively small permanent staff. An important part of a head gardener's role was to ensure that his men were kept occupied, and during the winter months if there was insufficient work in kitchen and pleasure grounds, the workforce moved to indoor work or tree-planting in arboreta and plantations. This created a good training ground for apprentices and journeymen who had the experience of working in more than one garden area rather than having to specialise in one department at a time.

The head gardeners looked at in this chapter fall into two categories. Firstly, there were the men who worked in the top gardens in the county. A few became celebrities with several foremen and many under-gardeners and apprentices beneath them. Secondly, there were the head gardeners who were in charge of a garden, but who had not yet reached their final potential and were still working their way up the career ladder, or who had settled for a lesser position. As has been shown in Chapter Two there was a hierarchy within the gardening profession. This could change, as employment circumstances changed and as men moved from garden to garden. For example:

A Head-Gardener or Upper Gardener, is a master who has apprentices or journeymen employed under him. Out of place and working as a journeyman, he retains the rank and title of master-gardener, but not of head-gardener.⁵

The hierarchy of head gardeners depended, in part, on the garden owner's own position in society, their wealth and their interest in gardening. It also depended on where the head gardener had trained. For example, Charles Bennett was one of the top head gardeners in the county. He trained initially at Bicton and went on to work in important gardens in Wiltshire and Worcestershire before returning to Devon to manage the garden at Bradfield.⁶

It has not been possible to trace the lives of all the known apprentices and young gardeners who trained in Devon, and therefore it is not known how many eventually

became head gardeners, but Philip Lang, an apprentice at Heavitree aged 19 in 1851, was a gardener at Winslade House in Exeter in 1861 and Head Gardener at Poltimore from at least 1867 to 1881. Thomas Bray who trained at Peak House in Sidmouth became a head gardener in Oxfordshire.⁷

Within the different levels of the gardening hierarchy, individuals brought their own personality to bear to affect their working practices. James Barnes, despite being in overall charge of Bicton garden, still preferred to undertake some of the physical work of gardening himself:

I must observe, that I am as fond of preparing for the planting out a cabbage, as I am of tending the most beautiful or arresting plant in the hot house or greenhouse; and I always make it a rule to have a hand in it myself.⁸

For the purposes of this study the head gardener will be addressed as 'he' as it was not until the very end of the nineteenth century that horticultural colleges took on some of the training which had traditionally been undertaken by the head gardener. This enabled middle class women to train as professional gardeners. Although it had long been acknowledged that women worked as market gardeners and helped in nurseries (see Chapters Five and Six), women who wanted to become professional gardeners were faced with hostility from the gardening profession as a whole.⁹ It was not until the twentieth century that they were accepted in gardens by employers and their male contemporaries. Some did succeed though; in 1901 Ada Cassidy was head gardener at Bignor Park in Sussex, with, very unusually, three women under-gardeners, and Alice Hutchings was a head gardener at Burstall in Suffolk in the same year. However, so far, no women head gardeners have been found in Devon prior to the First World War.¹⁰

Head Gardeners and their Employers

To date, a total of 640 head gardeners have been identified who worked in Devon during the nineteenth century. This equates to just over four per cent of those listed on the gardener database. For eighty of these men, there are limited records, with little more than a name and where they worked. Frequently this is due to them working in the county prior to the census of 1841. Fifty-six per cent are known to have been born in Devon, the remainder came from over thirty counties nationwide as well as from Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Some men such as Emmanuel Culley, from Shillingford in Berkshire, who worked at Strete Raleigh, Whimble from 1866 to 1870, where two of his

sons were born, and Edwin Bryant, head gardener at Bickham, Buckland Monochorum, were just passing through and were only based in Devon for a few years.¹¹ John Tidball was at Escot for just three years from September 1862 until the end of December 1865, but George Underdown, who followed him as head gardener to the Kennaway family in April 1866, was still there in 1902; a total of thirty-six years.¹² This was not uncommon, obituaries and census returns show that having found a good position, gardeners frequently stayed for many years in one garden. For example, Samuel Farquhar was head gardener at Dunect near Aberdeen for fifty-two years, George Bond at Walcot in Shropshire for forty-seven years and John Daniels at Swyncombe Park, Henley-on-Thames for forty-two years.¹³ In Devon, George Prince was at Newnham for forty years, James Griffin at Eggesford for thirty-four years and Alexander Booth at Escot for fifty years.¹⁴ Jessica Gerard suggests that head gardeners stayed an average of eleven years per garden.¹⁵ The findings of this study, however, show the average length of time for Devon head gardeners to remain in one place was just under fourteen years. A comparison between Maristow and Escot gardens demonstrates that some estates had a much higher turnover of staff than others (see Figure 4:1 below).

Figure 4:1. Comparison of number of head gardeners working in Maristow and Escot gardens throughout the nineteenth century

Maristow			Escot		
1798	1800	Robert Venton	1780	1830	Alexander Booth
1800	1802	Thomas Flatman	1833	1847	John Mason
1802	1806	Alexander Machid	1850	1862	James Towell*
1807	1807	John Vanstone	1862	1865	John Tidball
1808	1814	Robert Lakeman	1866	1902	George Underdown
1814	1818	Nicholas Craig			
1818	1824	Martin Curley			
1825	1826	Abraham Brooks			
1826	1837	William Kerslake*			
1838	1838	Francis Yole			
1838	1838	Ash **			
1838	1839	William Clink			
1839	1843	Francis Morgan			
1843	1854	Benjamin Dawson			
1865	1876	Philip Wright			
1876	1881	John Little			
1890	1891	Donald Mackay			
1901	1911	Robert Tutchter			

*died in service. **A temporary man supplied by John Brown’s Nursery.

Source: PWDRO 874/3/1-61, 874/24/1-2, Census returns 1881, 1891, 1901, GC 26.07.1890; EFP 28.01.1830, 2d, 18.07.1833, 4d/e, 11.11.47; DRO 961M/add/E34; *Kelly’s Directory* (1902).

The number of gardeners who served at Maristow compared with just five for the same period at Escot is difficult to explain. The salary paid at Maristow was similar to that paid at Escot, except in the case of Philip Wright, where he was actually paid twenty pounds a year more than George Underdown. It could have been difficult to find another man who suited as well as William Kerslake who was in charge of the garden for eleven years, but died in service. However, Maristow had had a high turnover of men previous to Kerslake, so this is unlikely to be the case.

It may simply have been that some owners were just more difficult to work with. Mr J. Freeman admitted to having had eight or nine gardeners since he had moved to The Grange at Withycombe Raleigh, none lasting more than a few months. He claimed one had lasted, 'nearly a year, but he had charge of the place whilst I was in 'foreign lands''. Freeman was being sued for non-payment of wages by two gardeners at the time this comment was made.¹⁶ This could give a hint as to why he had employed so many men in less than ten years. A month earlier, John Shaxon, another gardener had also sued his employer Mr Lindeman of Sidmouth for non-payment of wages.¹⁷

Another owner, sued by a gardener, was Mr. Benmore of Exmouth. Benmore had dismissed his gardener because some panes of glass on the roof of the glasshouse were broken by the weight of snow, despite he said, of having ordered protective boards to be placed on the roof. He claimed that the man, Samuel Gibbons, had been employed, not as a gardener, but as a general labourer, although the wages paid of 18s in 1889, soon raised to £1 a week, suggests that this was not the case. (Samuel Gibbons was listed in the census as a gardener from 1881 to 1901. His father Edward, was also a gardener). It appears from the write-up of the case that the court had more sympathy with Benmore who joked throughout the proceedings gaining the sympathy of the court. As a result, the judgement went against Gibbons who was forced to pay for copies of the *Gardener's Chronicle* given to him by Mrs Benmore.¹⁸

It was probable that earlier in the century a gardener would have accepted being summarily dismissed without payment of wages, but the successful court case of James Barnes versus Lady Rolle had changed the attitude of gardeners to their employers. In 1869, Barnes had left Bicton having claimed that his health was failing due to overwork. His employer, Lady Rolle, was upset that after almost thirty years as head gardener he had left, and committed her dissatisfaction to paper making the complaint

that Barnes had left the garden in an untidy state. Barnes, having been made aware of these letters, and with a reputation as a top head gardener to defend, sued Lady Rolle. The court case was heard in London rather than locally where Lady Rolle might have had more influence on the judgement. The libel was admitted and Mr Lopes, acting for the defendant, suggested to the jury that this should be sufficient in itself and that Barnes should be awarded token damages of just one farthing in compensation. However, the jury awarded Barnes damages of £100 (almost one years' salary) and costs. The case was written up in *The Times* and in the horticultural press and was received with mixed feelings by gardeners and employers alike.¹⁹

Robert Begbie had followed Barnes to Bicton. Aged 50, he was probably looking for a garden in which he could settle. However, he was only at Bicton for four and a half years and moved at least twice more before he retired. Begbie had not helped the situation by criticising publicly the plant management of Barnes.²⁰

In 1897 *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire* listed ninety-six head gardeners under the title of 'Private gardeners'. Of these, fifteen were employed by women and seven by clergymen. Seventy-two worked for aristocracy and gentry. In the 1906 edition of the *Directory* the number had increased to 128 gardeners, serving twenty-one women, fourteen clergy and six institutions, in addition to gentlemen owners. The listing of these men demonstrates how the head gardener continued to grow in importance into the twentieth century, and the variety of gardens in which he might have worked.

George Balment worked at the Devon County School and George Mortimore at the Devon County Asylum at Exminster. The latter position had been advertised in August 1877 with wages of 21s per week (£54.12s a year).²¹ It is not known whether or not the gardener was employed to teach the inmates, using gardening as a form of therapy, but fit males from the asylum certainly worked in the garden under his supervision.²² Institutions which employed gardeners included reformatory schools and workhouses (see page 79). Other employers of head gardeners included the Devon and Exeter hospital where James Barrow worked, assisted by an under-gardener, to keep the grounds in order.²³ Hotels too, employed men, such as William Newcombe who worked at the Imperial Hotel in Exmouth, to keep the grounds 'in a state of perfection' and George Smaldon who worked at the Ilfracombe Hotel in 1891.²⁴ Hotel grounds were intended to provide somewhere to walk or to sit and to give the feel of a country house

garden, which it was hoped, would encourage wealthier tourists to stay in their premises.

There were also gardeners employed in the many parks in the county. In 1898 Exeter City Council considered for a long time as to whether they should pay a working gardener or employ a superintendent to oversee all the park gardeners in the city. Eventually, it was decided to employ a working 'Foreman' gardener, who would fulfil both roles. He was to be paid £1.10s a week (£78 a year) with a house. Two men solicited the council for the position. Mr Bartlett, aged 27, and Mr Andrews, an older man of 52, who had worked with the Veitch nursery and had a background that would enable him to, 'deal with large orders and lay out grounds as the City Council required'.²⁵ The decision was difficult in that Mr Andrews was considered somewhat elderly for the position, yet he had the qualifications, whereas Mr Bartlett had youth on his side. After much deliberation, the Council appointed Mr Andrews and suggested that when he retired, that Mr Bartlett reapply for the position.²⁶ Richard Moore, formerly in service as an ornamental gardener to his Grace the Duke of Somerset at Stover, and who had also worked at Veitch & Son, secured a position in charge of the public cemetery in Exeter in 1843, 'James Sclater having been dismissed'. The salary of £1 per week proved very attractive and there were thirty six candidates for this position, of which seven were short-listed.²⁷

Malcolm Dunn suggested a written contract of work between a gardener and owner would go, 'a long way to prevent future misunderstandings and numerous heartburnings'.²⁸ Although no contracts have been found for Devon gardeners for the nineteenth century it is known that they would have existed. The agent for Powderham in estimating the minimum requirements for a garden staff wrote down his expectations of the head gardener's responsibilities:

The Gardener should be required ... to keep the Kitchen Garden, the Grotto Garden and the Flower Garden in front of the Castle entirely, and also to keep the Paths & Edging, weed the Clumps, and clean up the Grass after mown in the Pleasure Ground by the Castle. He should also attend to the old Houses in the latter place, so long as they may be kept up.²⁹

Sometimes, especially in smaller gardens, the owner would communicate directly with the gardener. Many owners would have sent their instructions by letter to wives, family members or an agent as Sir Francis Drake did to Nicholas Rowe when he was in

London.³⁰ At Maristow and Buckland Abbey the agent, George Giles, looked after both properties. Unfortunately few of these records survive and it is even rarer to see the response from a gardener. An unusual method of communication was used by the Combe Family of Earnshill at Curry Rivel in Somerset. Paper was folded into sections. On one side there were instructions and questions, on the other the answers. The papers were sent to either a brother (Edward) or to the gardener direct and included requests for plants. (See Figure 4:2 below).

Figure 4:2. Sample of instructions sent backwards and forwards with produce between Coombe family concerning the administration of Earnshill household and gardens and the Ilminster estates

From R. T. Coombe to Edward and Gardener	From Edward or the gardener
Send the gardener a peck of early frame peas – he must return the bag by the next basket March 1 1815 I sent some cuttings of the America poplar some of which plant in the south garden some in a more shady garden and some in any place in which Edward or you may think they will thrive. Tell the gardener to use every precaution to prevent the rats destroying the garden crops. Tell the gardener to get the seed potatoes of Mr Harding of Hele Farm South Petherton. Take a list of the flower seeds.	Arrived at Curry, but not brot here yet.
Desire the gardener to send some myrtle Erica carnea, and any other flowers next basket for Maddisons epergne – rather more myrtle than he sent last and some leaves for fruit dishes and if there are plenty of apples for our own use to send 2 doz of good nonpareils Johnnys.	Told
Did you not write for some thing to destroy the rats and has it been sent	ordered, had
Send some nuts next basket and the paper containing the number of bunches of grapes out.	sent March 15
	Mar 22 nd Please to get some China Asters Seeds in Bath as I forgot to put it in the list of seeds that was sent to London
	Yes
	No
	Jan 17 th 1816 [from gardener] Please to send one doz of Russia Mats

Source: Somerset Record Office DD\CM/37 1807-1831

The gardener kept his own lists of produce sent in a note book. For example:

March 1815. Celery, Sea Cale, Flowers, Asparagus, Savoys, Parsley, Horseradish, Spinage, Endive, Small Salad, Broccoli, Baking apples, table apples, endive, Filberts, Cob nuts, Greens, salad radishes, Flowers. [Author's punctuation]³¹

The Role of the Head Gardener

Loudon suggested that a head gardener should keep himself at the top of his profession by:

...taking care to be informed of every improvement and invention in his line, as they are discovered and made public. He must not only know all that is in books, but must be in advance in knowledge; not only ready to apply all the best practices, but fertile in expedients on extraordinary occasion, and in cases of novelty, difficulty, or emergency.³²

As shall be seen, this last phrase demonstrates the wide-ranging role of the head gardener. Not only was he in charge of the gardens, but frequently of plantations and farms, combining his role with that of a woodman, hind, agent, estate or farm bailiff or even sometimes, as in the case of John Glanfield at Woodlands House, as gamekeeper. Gardeners were contacts for the sale of the deer park at Buckerell, sold timber at Ashbury and let milch cows at Heanton Court.³³ They arranged for ice houses to be filled in winter, ensured their men acted as watchmen at night and security men by day. They were caretakers during the owners' absence, and frequently ran the estate fire-service.³⁴ In addition, head gardeners escorted visitors around the estate, kept detailed weather and plant records, experimented with the latest plant imports, and created designs and colour schemes in gardens. It is no wonder that James Barnes claimed he worked 'from 18 to 20 hours daily'.³⁵

Thomas Flatman at Maristow, John Forester at Endsleigh and John Veitch at Killerton acted as overseers, organising clearing and planting of land, construction of garden features and buildings, and supervising the home farm.³⁶ The head gardener's work was frequently combined with caring for plantations and nurseries, and they were responsible for paying workmen and contractors. They therefore needed management skills in addition to a practical understanding of gardening. Many, like Barnes, had previously worked in nurseries and market gardens in or around London before becoming a head gardener and brought the skills of commercial gardening to benefit private gardens.

An educated gardener who was able to assimilate new ideas and working practices was more likely to gain employment with the wealthier class of garden owner. He was expected to be a professional, who acted as a middleman between owners and staff, and to be of impeccable moral character:

First of all, his character must be able to bear the strictest investigation; his integrity and uprightness irreproachable. His general appearance should have a commanding influence, and his countenance of a drawing rather than of a repulsive nature; a man you can approach with the confidence and assurance of having meted out to you justice tempered with mercy. As to his abilities, he must not only be thoroughly practical in all branches of the profession but he must have good managing abilities, and be thoroughly educated so as to converse on any or all subjects with the ease and comfort of a barrister-at-law.³⁷

With expectations such as these it was no wonder that he was called 'Mr' by his contemporaries and addressed as 'Sir' by his staff.³⁸ To denote his status, in photographs he is frequently shown wearing a top hat or a bowler, whereas the under gardeners wore flat caps. His word was law and nobody would dare question his orders or decisions. Often owners and their families were equally in awe, asking permission to cut flowers or take visitors through the kitchen garden.³⁹

He objects, on principle, to his choicest blossoms being cut by his mistress or her daughters, or the finest bunches of grapes being gathered; when his green-houses and hot-houses are to be rifled, he prefers that it should be done by himself rather than by his mistress, and ladies who value their gardeners are inclined to humour this weakness.⁴⁰

The head gardener controlled the daily lives of all the gardeners working beneath him, and frequently influenced their future as well. As has been seen in Chapter Two, he had the power to discharge a man or find him a position elsewhere, to withhold a reference, or conversely, to give encouragement and help towards a successful future.

The Single-Handed Head Gardener

The wide ranging responsibilities of a single-handed gardener would have been similar to that of a top head gardener in that he would have been in charge of the garden. However, he would have been a hands-on working gardener, not just a superintendent and may have had many other duties to fulfil as well, such as overseeing a small dairy:

In small families, or in gardens not exceeding an acre, with a paddock of three or four acres for a horse or cow, it is usual to keep but one gardener, who, at an out-

door salary of a guinea a week, performs all the necessary work in the garden, milks the cow, feeds the poultry, and, sometimes, takes care of the horse, his assistant being a jobbing labourer during a few weeks of particular duty. ... the only questions which arise between them and their employer, are the difficulties which they feel at first in accommodating the practice on a large scale to that on a small and economical one; but, when reconciled to this, no situation is more independent and comfortable than that of the solitary and accommodating gardener.⁴¹

Loudon recommended that single-handed gardeners should be chosen from the lowest order of regular gardeners, presumably little more than a garden labourer, as, 'all of a higher grade will expect to have labourers under them to do the rougher work.' He maintained it would be 'worth while to give good wages to get one of the best, as it will be much to the advantage of the master to obtain a person of a tolerable degree of intelligence'.⁴²

Many gardeners in Devon would have worked without any help at all, or with just a boy or a casual labourer to help at busy times, as there were a large number of villa gardens in the county for retirees, tradesmen and middle-class professionals. Trained gardeners had the option of several positions. Large villas at Teignmouth created work for Thomas Webb at Fair Oak, Samuel Frost at Cambrien, Lewis Jackman at Clifden Lodge, James Howard at The Rowdens and William Crispin at Florian Lodge.⁴³ There were fewer gardens with a large garden staff, but even in important gardens there were differences between a 'working' head who worked alongside his men, and one who was a manager, left free to deal with nurserymen, designers, other head gardeners or to plan for horticultural shows. The aspirations of a garden owner dictated the expectation of a gardener.

Some gardeners direct much of their attention and skill to forcing fruit, flowers, and vegetables, and are allowed by their masters to exhibit specimens of their skill in this direction; but as this forcing system, when carried out to any extent, is attended with no little expense, both as regards money and time, some masters object to its being indulged in; and again, many people think that moderate forcing, for their own table, of such vegetables as potatoes, French beans, peas, asparagus, in addition to cucumbers and mushrooms, &c., are all that is required, and dispense with such luxuries as strawberries, pines, and melons until they are fairly in season and not wholly out of season.⁴⁴

Living Conditions of Head Gardeners – Marriage and Children

In contrast with journeymen, head gardeners were frequently expected to be married, although often without children. The latter was a source of complaint in the gardening

press where gardeners expressed their dissatisfaction at this restriction when attempting to find work if they already had a family.⁴⁵ However:

Early marriages are not always conducive to the future success, prosperity, and happiness of a gardener, and it would be well for every young man to give the matter his serious consideration before entering the matrimonial state. For he will find many of the advertisements for gardeners close with a special request that there be no family, or if a family is allowed it must be a small one.⁴⁶

A family put a strain on a gardener's time and finances. This prohibited him from spending time and money on studying which could also prevent him from obtaining the positions he needed to enhance his career. Marriage and a family could split loyalties.

Information from the gardeners' database suggests that many men such as William Gillies (Stevenstone), Albert Williams (Knowle Cottage) and James Farmer (Knightshayes), married on obtaining a position as a head gardener. Frequently head gardeners' wives had previously been servants and were often older than their husbands. Termed 'life-style servants' by Jessica Gerard, their life skills, gained while in service, were an asset to the gardener.⁴⁷ Having a wife ensured that there was someone to look after the young gardeners on an estate, often housed as lodgers or boarders in their own home. Albert Stewart at Collipriest and William Litter at Bickham both lodged with the head gardener, as did some under-gardeners at Flete.⁴⁸ At Fremington, John and Susan Bartlett had two young gardeners living with them in 1861 and when John moved to board in Fremington House itself, George Hern was cared for by Susan in a cottage on the estate.⁴⁹ Wives also acted as hostess when other gardeners or nurserymen visited the garden.

In common with many middle class women, wives of the top gardeners were not expected to have an occupation of their own. In less important gardens wives could be called upon to act in a variety of capacities to benefit an estate. Ann Keddie was a housekeeper at Heathfield, Aveton Gifford while John was head gardener at Horswell.⁵⁰ Where a wife did work, it was usually because their husband was gardener to a smaller establishment where a couple 'lived in'; wives like Eliza Ann Cridge, at Dawlish and Ann Frost at Cambrian Villa in Teignmouth, acted as cooks and laundresses.⁵¹ Other couples included Jonathan and Margaret Pickard at Torquay and George and Mary Widicombe at Mamhead Rectory.⁵² Wives sometimes took up an occupation when their husband was getting older, partially to add financial support, hence Elizabeth Ellis recorded no occupation when her husband was in his forties and fifties and worked at

Flete, but as they aged and their children had left home she was listed in the census as a laundress.⁵³ When John McEvoy married Margaret Robertson in 1846 she was already housekeeper at Arlington Court.⁵⁴

Married head gardeners who lived on a rural estate required accommodation. This was usually a purpose built gardener's house which should be, 'as near the garden as possible'.⁵⁵ Where there was no specific gardener's house an estate lodge or cottage was used. Many of the larger villa owners also provided a gardener's house or cottage, to enable the gardener to oversee, often literally, the daily work. For this reason many gardeners' houses were placed near to, or within the kitchen garden. Where records have been found, forty-three percent of head gardeners lived in a gardener's house within the gardens, twenty-seven percent lived in a lodge on the estate, fourteen percent occupied a cottage in the grounds and only eight percent lived in the main house, (see Figure 4:3 below). A further nine percent were housed elsewhere. The latter were most frequently gardeners in urban areas such as Dawlish, Sidmouth, Exeter St Davids and Topsham where there was no gardener's cottage provided, instead they lived within easy walking distance of the garden. These were also probably gardens which had minimal staff and without elaborate glasshouses which needed regular attention.

Figure 4:3. Percentage of gardeners accommodated by garden owners



Source: Gardener's database.

Young or unmarried head gardeners, like Thomas Whiddon, 27, and Thomas Yole, 36, were accommodated in servants quarters. Gardeners also slept in the house to protect the property in the absence of the owner. Proof that this was needed was seen at Cleave House in Exeter, when a burglary was foiled because the gardener had taken valuables into his bedroom in the house when his master was away.⁵⁶

A 'Common Sense Reforming Gardener' worried that the practice of combining the role of caretaker and gardener led to few opportunities for 'self-improvement' for a man who could be distracted by the other occupants of the servants hall. He complained that 'drinking, swearing, and low language is as much to be found in such a place, generally speaking, as in the *ale-house*'.⁵⁷ Some gardeners combined both forms of living arrangements, moving to live in the owner's house as and when needed, but otherwise having their own accommodation, as seen with John Bartlett above.⁵⁸

Cost of a Head Gardener to an Estate - Provision and Maintenance of Housing

Provision of gardener's housing did not come cheaply. There were taxes to be paid on the house, the cost of building and maintenance. During the garden restorations at Bickton in 1837, Lady Louisa Rolle forwarded a plea from the gardener (probably Robert Glendinning), to improve his own accommodation which was certainly no elaborate purpose built gardener's house.

The Gardener has asked to have a little stove put in the kitchen of his cottage & I see no objection to it, if you do not – like the ones in the last western Lodges – He also requests to have a little bit of the old fruit house not now used, (since the one at the new garden was built,) divided off with a door to go into it from their kitchen, to use as a Wash house, & their [sic] is no objection to that either.⁵⁹

In 1853 a quotation of £130 was received to re-roof the Bickton gardener's house in lead, 'as the pitch of the roof of the said cottage is too flat for a slate roof and the roof cannot be raised because it would form an unpleasant object if seen above the roof the Temple.' The total cost of the work including re-roofing the adjoining Temple was estimated to be £280 even with the deduction of £40 for the value of the old lead.⁶⁰

Loudon was as involved in designing gardener's houses as in all other aspects of gardeners' lives. He published several designs, assisted by 'an architectural draughtsman' in the *Gardener's Magazine*, one of which, a bungalow with cellars underneath, included an office, a wash house and a beer-cellar.⁶¹ In *The Encyclopaedia*

of Gardening he had suggested that a gardener's house should be as near the garden as possible and recommended that in addition to 'a kitchen and sleeping rooms, the gardener's house should contain at least one good parlour.' He also maintained that 'where the head-gardener's house is in the kitchen garden, a flower-garden ought to be allowed for his wife', not too far away from their residence.⁶² A parlour and flower garden were not just to benefit the gardener, but were necessary for entertaining guests. In this age of improvements to housing Charles McIntosh had similar ideas and thought that a basic gardener's house should contain 'three bedrooms with wall closets in each', a 'sitting parlour', a dining room, pantry, larder, kitchen, water closet and fuel store.⁶³ The gardener's house at Lupton was obviously built in this fashion containing, a front and back kitchen, parlour, three bedrooms and 'necessaries'.⁶⁴ The contrast between a head gardener's house and that of the journeymen living in a bothy was immense. At Maristow, the two-roomed bothy was, as was common, built in the sheds behind the glasshouses and was occupied by William Blackmore and Walter Bond the under-gardeners, while Robert Tutchter and his wife Janet lived in a substantial property adjoining the kitchen garden.⁶⁵

However, there were problems with tied houses where 'a head gardener with a house to live in rent free is a menial servant and is liable to be discharged on a month's notice.'⁶⁶ Loudon was aware of this problem in 1822 and wrote:

As a gardener, in common with other domesticated servants, is liable to be removed from the house he occupies at short notice, and without any reference to his having, or being able to procure another, it follows, as a matter of justice, that what are called house fixtures should be provided by the master.⁶⁷

Equally the death of an owner could cause the loss of a job and home (see Chapter Two). When John Yarde Buller, Baron Churston, died in 1871, the head gardener continued to run the garden at Lupton as normal. However, by April 1873, the gardens were being advertised to let to 'Market Gardeners and Others'. The tenancy to include about four and a half acres of garden which contained the gardener's house with the gardener in residence.⁶⁸ It is not known whether the gardens were let at this time, but in 1897 they were let to Matthew Peeke, market gardener. George Erskine, the gardener at Lupton since at least 1861, was still in residence in August 1873 acting as a Judge at the Torbay Horticultural Society Exhibition, although he had retired by 1881.⁶⁹ Conversely, some head gardeners served several generations of a family as did David Atkins at Clovelly Court and William Gullick at Kelly House.

Pay and Conditions

Another cost to the estate was that of the salary and wages of the head gardener and his staff. Servant tax was also paid for gardeners who were deemed to be in service.⁷⁰ This was fifteen shillings per annum at Fremington for one man in 1887.

A superior head gardener had several advantages over the position of a journeyman or under-gardener. His status rose so that he was on a par with the top staff indoors usually the butler and the cook, but unlike them, he rarely lived in the house and therefore was not subject to house rules. His position was reinforced by the style in which he lived, which frequently included a substantial, attractively designed house. Separate accommodation gave him a freedom that other staff did not have. His income increased although rarely to match his counterparts indoors.⁷¹ Alexander Keith earned £100 as head gardener at Castle Hill in 1839. The house steward and French cook earned £105 and £130 respectively.⁷²

It is not always easy to identify what the head gardener was being paid, his salary was often included as part of his general expenses. For example at Fremington the gardener was often paid money on account. Sometimes expenditure was specified, 'May 23 By Cash pd to Taylor for Gardens Coals Butchers meat given to poor and nursery bill £52.11s.7d', more often it was simply noted as 'on account' and could involve sums as low as £5 (April 18 1882) to much larger sums 'Gardens account £121.5s.11½d (March 1st 1884).⁷³ These entries inform about his responsibilities, but not about his salary.

Arthur Hooper suggests that in 1926 a head gardener might be expected to earn £5 a week, more than four times the wages of a journeyman.⁷⁴ The difference does not appear to be so great in nineteenth century Devon. Henry Beddard earned exactly twice the salary of the foreman Albert Ballhatchet, who earned just £3.4s a year more than the other journeymen in the garden. Although George Underdown earned £80 a year, he received just over two and a half times as much money per year as his men.⁷⁵

Annual salaries at Maristow, Bicton and Stevenstone were paid quarterly.⁷⁶ Some men, including Saunders at Kitley and Richard Willis at Mamhead, were paid half yearly.⁷⁷ An advantage to this system was that it could become a form of saving, enabling the gardener to purchase property which ensured future security and independence.

Figure 4:4. Salaries paid to head gardeners in Devon in the nineteenth century

Garden	From	To	Salary	Gardener
Maristow	1800	1801	£50	Thomas Flatman
Maristow	1802	1807	£50	Alexander Mackid
Maristow	1808	1814	£41.12s	Robert Lakeman
Saltram	1809	1831	£42-£50 + £11 for horse	David Smith
Kitley	1813	1814	£46.16s	Nicholas Craig
Maristow	1814	1818	£40	Nicholas Craig
Endsleigh	1815	1843	£50	John Forrester
Powderham	1816	1833	£84	William Hall
Endsleigh	1818		£46.16s	William Cornelius
Maristow	1818	1824	£40	Martin Curley
Maristow	1825	1826	£36.8s	Abraham Brooks
Maristow	1826	1847	£36.8s: £41.12s from 1832	William Kerslake
Kitley	1831	1854	£40	Herman Saunders
Endsleigh	1834		£52	
Saltram	1834	1851	£70 to £80	Richard Luke
Mamhead	1835	1855	£75	Richard Willis
Maristow	1838	1854	£48; £52 in 1839	William Clink
Castle Hill	1839	1841	£100	Alexander Keith
Cemetery HG	1843		£52	Richard Moore
Bridwell	1844		£35	
Bicton	1845	1869	£110	James Barnes
Horswell House	1847	1855	£50	John Keddie
Saltram	1852	1877	£70- £60 in '65 ?pension	John Snow
Kitley	1854		£78	Herman Saunders
Escot	1858	1862	£52 inc to £57.4s in 1860	Towill
Powderham	1860		£52	HG
Escot	1862	1865	£52	John Tidball
Maristow	1865	1876	£75-£80	Philip Wright
Escot	1866	1877	£54.12s: £80 in 1877	George Underdown,
Stevenstone	1866	1867	£60	Alexander McKelvie
Stevenstone	1868	1869	£65	George Hood
Bicton	1869	1873	£110	Robert Begbie
Escot	1871		£60	George Underdown
Maristow	1872	1876	£80	Philip Wright
Streatham Hall	1872		£100	Henry Beddard
Bicton	1873	1877	£110	Alfred George
Stevenstone	1874	1877	£70: £80 in 1877	William Sharpe
Devon Asylum	1877		£54.12s	George Mortimer
Wiscombe	1878	1879	£52.15s	William Doble
Kitley	1881	1895	£60	Cawse
Stover	1881		£65 (£70)	Samuel Shapley
Widdicombe	1882	1883	£50	William Creber
Bicton	1883	1886	£110	Frederick Jackson
Hall Estate	1883		£26 plus expenses	William Tucker
Bicton	1886	1890	£85: £104.10s in 1889	William Phillips
Newnham Park	1888	1890	£52.16s	
Watermouth				
Gardens	1895		£100	
Hall Estate	1899	1903	£82.4s	William Tucker

Source: Wages database.

With a cottage to live in, and allowances of vegetables, fuel and milk, living expenses were low, so a salary paid in a lump sum meant that it could be used to purchase items which otherwise would have had to be saved for over a much longer period. For example, money could be invested or an annuity bought for retirement. Even a contribution towards the Royal Gardener's Benevolent Fund acted as a form of health or retirement insurance. Investment could also be made into a business, ensuring a comfortable retirement or a legacy for family.

Head gardeners were mostly paid an annual salary which depended on the responsibility they held and, to some extent, the importance of the garden (see Figure 4:4 above). In 1842 when Lord Rolle died, Barnes at Bicton, was paid £84 per year. However, by 1845 this had been increased to £110 and this remained the head gardener's salary until 1886 when, following the death of Lady Louisa Rolle the previous November, the head gardener's salary was reduced to £85 a year plus the addition of an annual £4.10s milk allowance. By 1890 the salary had been increased to £100 plus a milk allowance. By contrast, at Stevenstone, the other home of Mark Rolle who had inherited Bicton, Alexander McKelvie was paid £60 per annum in 1866, George Hood £65 in 1868 and William Sharpe £70 in 1874 rising to £80 in 1877.⁷⁸ This may have been because Stevenstone was in north Devon where wages tended to be lower, or, simply that Bicton was a more important garden.

The only other head gardeners to be paid a similar salary to those at Bicton were Henry Beddard at Streatham Court in Exeter, Alexander Keith at Castle Hill and the gardener at Watermouth, although the latter's £100 salary was inclusive of the labourer's wages.⁷⁹ William Tucker, on the Hall estate, only earned just over £80 a year in 1899, but was also in receipt of a housekeeping allowance of a further £30.⁸⁰

Longevity in one position frequently ensured some form of security in that healthcare was often provided; wealthy estates paying for doctor's visits and, where necessary, sick pay. There was often the opportunity to purchase an annuity to provide an income when retired. Some estates had retirement cottages where their pensioners could live and in some cases long-service pensions were paid for loyal service, for example, John Chapman at Stevenstone received a pension of four shillings a week.⁸¹

Perquisites

Although a head gardener's salary was not always large, there were ways to increase his income. Tips were paid to the gardeners for showing wealthy visitors around the garden. Towards the end of the century, some of the visitors were less wealthy fellow gardeners, or parties of people who belonged to groups such as the Exeter Rovers' Cycling Club or the Exeter Gardeners' Mutual Improvement Association.⁸² Tips were also given if they took plants to other gardens.

As has been seen in Chapter Two it was not uncommon for a head gardener to charge a premium for training apprentices. Although this was considered a common practice it is difficult to find proof that it was happening in Devon. Head gardeners did train apprentices in Devon but as they were unlikely to keep details of this type of transaction, probably made without the overt approval of the owner (any owner who was a regular reader of the gardening press must have been aware of the practice), it can only be speculation that this happened within the county.

There was also the possibility of backhanders from nurserymen for supply of plants, or equipment. Arthur Hooper mentions that tradesmen who dealt with the head gardener could be generous if they placed regular and substantial orders.⁸³ Discounts were given by nurserymen for prompt payment, but the only record of these appear quite legitimately in garden accounts, when for example Rendle's allowed 2s 11d towards the cost of fruit trees at Buckland Abbey in 1820.⁸⁴

Head gardeners were also encouraged to endorse new products in a similar fashion to how famous names are used today in advertisements. It is likely that they would have been paid for this service. James Barnes, for example, endorsed Smith and Ashby's products commenting:

The Hay-making Machine, which you supplied to Lady Rolle arrived in safety, and we are well satisfied with its operation. It is our intention to order *one of your Patent Horse Rakes that we may work the two together*. This I consider very important.⁸⁵

Endorsements had the effect of keeping the name of the head gardener, the garden owner and the estate in the public eye. In this case it also demonstrated that Bickton was keeping up to date with all the latest technology.

Some gardeners benefited from a legacy. Usually dependent on length of service it was another area where the gardener often fared worse than his indoor counterparts. For example, Mr John Dawson of Northbrooke Park, Exeter, left legacies of £1,000 to his butler, £200 to a footman and £150 each to the head gardener and coachman. Mr Sampson Hanbury's will left £100 each to his coachman and butler, but only £20 to the gardener.⁸⁶ This may have been because, unless an owner was particularly interested in gardening, the head gardener would have been a more distant figure. He would not necessarily have had daily contact with the owner in the same way as a butler, footman or coachman would have done.

Management of Staff

‘...it is the head gardener's duty to apportion the work to each man employed in the gardens and to see that it is properly performed’.⁸⁷

The number of gardeners employed in a garden varied according to its size, its contents, and the work being undertaken. A garden with glasshouses required a larger and more specialist staff. At Endsleigh there was always a core of at least twelve garden staff which increased to seventeen in 1901.⁸⁸ Prestigious gardens with several garden departments would have employed a large staff comprising a head gardener, foremen, under-gardeners, garden labourers, boys and women.⁸⁹ This number varied from year to year according to circumstance and need, for example, many more labourers were required to create a new garden.

One of the most important aspects of being a head gardener was to supervise the creation and improvement of gardens, often adding designs of their own. Robert Glendinning was responsible for implementing the designs of W.S. Gilpin at Bicton, but he also laid out the lake and the kitchen garden himself.⁹⁰ Alexander Forsyth, dismissed by the Earl of Shrewsbury from Alton Park for refusing to become a Roman Catholic, was nevertheless given a reference by Nesfield, a garden designer, which enabled him to come to Devon to supervise the creation of the new garden at Watcombe for Isambard Kingdom Brunel. At the height of the construction he supervised about fifty men, but by 1851 he had just fourteen men under him.⁹¹ Other head gardeners who were employed to oversee the creation of new gardens included Mr Martin who worked for Sir B. P. Wrey at Gaule Lake House near Ashburton. He was responsible for ‘laying out an extensive garden a short distance from the house... with two large hot-houses of the

newest construction and terraces with evergreens to make a delightful country residence.’⁹² Mr Thomas Burnett, a young head gardener, who had trained with James Veitch in Exeter, remodelled the garden at Ashby Court, Tiverton before leaving the county to work in Slough, and James Enstone, head gardener at Weir House, Topsham, was awarded the first prize for a plan to lay out the new grounds at Wonford Lunatic Hospital for Exeter City Council.⁹³

A photograph of gardeners at Wembury House shows seven gardeners posed with a variety of gardening equipment. This is only a small staff, but equates with several gardens in Devon. An estimate of the staff needed to maintain part of Powderham garden in 1860 (the rest was leased to a tenant), suggested that the minimum staff required would be a head gardener, three men, two women and a boy.⁹⁴ Maristow had a staff of five men, one boy and a head gardener in 1874, but also regularly employed additional labourers as necessary.⁹⁵ Saltram’s garden staff consisted of nine in 1822, and Escot had ten gardeners in 1878 including one woman.⁹⁶

A comparison with gardens in other counties shows that in the region, estates such as Pentillie in Cornwall employed similar numbers to those in Devon. Pentillie had a staff of seven gardeners and two boys in addition to garden labourers.⁹⁷ However, larger gardens further afield such as Enville Hall in Staffordshire had a staff of twelve men in 1827 in addition to the head gardener. This number increased to eighteen in summer 1842, including one woman, and to twenty-two by 1900.⁹⁸ Ashburnham in Sussex employed a total of eleven gardeners split between the pleasure grounds, kitchen grounds and the ‘House’. None of the gardeners in the glasshouses worked in either of the other departments. As at Saltram and Powderham in Devon, each area was accounted for separately.⁹⁹

The head gardener had to staff a garden even when an estate fell on hard times and was losing money. A copy letter from William Rowley of Kingweston Gardens in Somerset, to the land agent Mr Hippisley, dated January 24 1898, complained:

As to reduce the garden staff you ask me about, I can assure you I have not staff sufficient to keep the garden decent now, and if you take off the labour the work cannot be done you know the Gardens are large, the pleasure grounds large. I am doing it with only 3 men and 2 boys and myself, the staff has been cut down year by year to this. When I came here in 1874, I had 8 men and a boy the garden expenses in that year were £341-13-0 now they are gone back to £200 – this will give you some idea of the cut down I have had from year to year. If you do

anything more you must shut up some of the Gardens and part of the Pleasure Grounds, and let it run to ruin, there is no other way, and now you are selling the spare vegetables, there is no waste. I can't tell you any more.¹⁰⁰

In smaller gardens where just a working head gardener was employed, additional labour was recruited on a regular basis. The Bishop of Exeter's gardener, Joseph Beer, employed extra labour at two shillings a day, usually in the summer months, presumably to help with mowing and watering, but in 1868 extra help was also paid for in October and November, although no reason was specified.¹⁰¹

Managing Finances

With authority of being a manager, trusted by the owner, a head gardener was usually in charge of hiring and dismissing staff and frequently of handling quite large sums of money. William Seaward at Creedy Park gardens handled a budget of up to £350 per year for wages and garden supplies.¹⁰² Some, like Mr Lock, had the authority to purchase rare plants. In 1883, Lock, gardener to Mr Cleave at Crediton, spent sixteen guineas on just three plants at a sale of rare plants in Exeter. The most expensive item was an 'Erica marnockiana', which he bought for seven guineas (£7.7s), the equivalent of a month's salary. The plants had regularly won prizes at horticultural shows during the previous seven years, and were well known among the top gardeners in the county.¹⁰³ It was probably hoped that the same plants would provide prizes for their new owner and, if propagated, could be sold to help offset the cost of their purchase.

It was also the responsibility of the head gardener to order all materials and equipment needed to ensure the smooth running of the gardens. This included plants and seeds from local nurseries, coal for the boilers, tan and bark for hotbeds, manures and tools. He also supervised the maintenance of the garden structures.¹⁰⁴ David Smith, head gardener at Saltram for thirty-five years was responsible for paying bills which far exceeded his salary. (He was paid £50 a year plus £11 for the keep of a horse). In 1820 these garden bills amounted to £668.12s.5d, approximately ten times his annual income.¹⁰⁵ Every penny had to be accounted for as all garden books were audited by the agent John Yolland. Smith kept separate accounts for the flower and kitchen gardens, apportioning work and costs between the two areas (see Figure 4:5 below).

Head gardeners attended sales where it was possible to purchase a bargain. William Sharpe at Stevenstone purchased a second-hand greenhouse from a sale at Beaford Rectory. However, in the same year he also bought a new forcing house from Boulton and Paul. The former cost £8.2s.9d, the latter £45.9s, plus an additional £52.16s.10d for the hot water pipes and fittings.¹⁰⁶

Figure 4:5. Page from David Smith's Kitchen Garden Account at Saltram 1822

Garden Acc ^t from Feby. 1 st to do. 20 th 1822.		£	s	d
Richard Gripp	2 1/2 days at 1/0	u	4	2 1/2
John Winget	13 do.	1	1	0
Richard Kearnlyn	3 at 1/6	u	4	6
Samuel Winget	7 do.	u	10	6
William Cefmore	2 1/4 do.	1	16	u
Jack Winget	2 1/4 at 6.	u	12	u
Mary Gripp	23 at 6d.	u	15	4
John Winget	2 Sundays	u	3	u
6 th Sulphur Vicious 3/-	1 th Scotch Linff 5/-	u	14	u
2 th Tobacco 10/-	12 th Potatoes 4/-	u	14	u
7 th Rice 2 1/2	56 th Rope Yarn 19/-	1	1	u 1/2
Courage of sundry things from Plymouth 1/6.	Ten spikes to help & thorns to help turning	u	3	6
16 lbs. Garden Nails at 3/4		2	13	4
Geo. Pinter's Bill to this date		u	7	4
Anthony Looper's Bill for Stones & Pavers for Garden Repairs		4	19	9
John Nye, for taking down & rebuilding the two main Pits & their drains	2:10:0	5 11 6		
do. for taking down & rebuilding the Mello for Pond & drainage	1 u u			
do. for taking down & rebuilding 6 of the Linhay Pillars	u 14 u			
do. for repairing part of the outer wall at Mello for	u 5 u			
do. for grooving the 4 Granite Rope Stones	u 5 u			
do. for several small jobs	u 5 u			
do. for 15 days at 2/-	1:10:0	21 11 7 1/2		
6:9:0				
6 th the Mello of 17 1/2 Hds of lime into mortar last year & then for	u 17 6	u	4	u
Lord Morley's Cart & 2 Horses 1/2 day about 7. Sand		u	4	u
		21	15	4 1/2
				X

Source: PWDRO 69/M/7/28.

With a garden staff to run the garden in his absence, a superintendent was able to attend shows and exhibitions, visit colleagues in other gardens and form good relationships with local nurserymen. William Sharpe of Stevenstone was paid his expenses for visits to a Barnstaple nursery; Herman Saunders spent three days in Exeter in November 1831 ‘selecting plants’ for a planned new garden and Samuel Taylor went to London to visit nurserymen there.¹⁰⁷ Gardeners shared expertise and swapped plants and seeds. They donated plants to cottagers and allotment holders. ‘I always make it a rule to impress on my employers the good, and even the necessity, of giving and exchanging plants with my neighbours’.¹⁰⁸ Sharing plants and seeds saved the necessity of purchasing expensive stock from nurserymen.

When it came to purchase of seeds, plants and equipment, head gardeners dealt direct with nurserymen, sometimes having one or two favourites, sometimes using a variety, both locally and nationally. Veitch, Lucombe and Pince from Exeter, Rendles and Pontey of Plymouth were generally favoured by large estates, not only for Devon, but also for many Cornish gardens. Specialist nurseries and seedsmen were also used such as Suttons for seeds, or Beck and Allan for trees.¹⁰⁹ Trees were often bought from further afield, the warm climate of Devon encouraging trees to establish themselves well if bought from a colder area. For example, Saltram bought larch, silver fir, oak and ash trees from William Wiseman of Forres in Scotland, shipping them down by rail.¹¹⁰

Managing Records

The gardener, to understand his business well, and to be capable of undertaking the management of a gentleman’s garden and grounds, should not only be perfect in the ordinary business, and the regular routine of digging, cropping, and managing a kitchen garden, but should be also well versed in the nature of soils, manures, and composts, the best methods of propagating plants, shrubs, and trees, the management of the hothouse, greenhouse, conservatory, hotbeds; and the culture, not only of indigenous, but also of foreign and exotic productions.¹¹¹

The variety of plants grown on one estate is illustrated by a table which listed flowers and vegetables sent from the kitchen gardens at Bicton by James Barnes, into the house, under headings ‘For Preserving’, ‘For the Table’ ‘For Servants’, ‘For Pickling’. The list includes eight salad varieties, twenty varieties of fruit including three of pineapple, twenty varieties of vegetable and sixteen of herbs (see Figure 4:6).¹¹² Barnes had been angered by the waste in the kitchens, and was afraid he would get the blame, so produced weekly lists of items dispatched from the garden. Vegetables included daily

supplies of onions and potatoes, root and salad crops. Servants had their own salad items, presumably of second quality. Produce was sent to the kitchen for pickling or preserving. Fruit was divided up into that for cooking or for the table. Plants and flowers were supplied to decorate the house. Ice was listed, although not supplied in the week recorded below. This list suggests that fresh fruit, vegetables and salad items were harvested daily, including Sundays.

Figure 4:6. Produce supplied to the kitchens at Bicton House, September 1842

Vegetable, Fruit, and Flower List, for the Week ending Saturday Sept. 25. 1842.

	Sept.	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		Sept.	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Mushrooms - dish	1					1			Dahlia - doz.	4				4			
French Beans -	1	1	1	1			1	1	Magnolia Flowers -	2				2			
Warwick Peas -			1						Plants for baskets in								
Early Frame Peas						1			front hall -	26				14			
Long Pod Beans -		1															
Windsor Beans -							1		Salad sent in for Table.								
Cauliflowers -	1	1	1			1	1		Cucumbers - dish	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Artichokes -				1					Lettuce -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Cape Broccoli -	1		1				1	1	Radishes -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Cabbage -	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	Celery -		1		1		1		
Greens or Coleworts	1					1			Endive -			1		1			
Turnips -	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	Red Beet -	1							
Carrots -	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	Mustard and Cress		1				1		
Potatoes -	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	American Cress -							1	
Vegetable Marrow -	1						1										
Spinach -			1			1			For Preserving.								
Silver Beet -	1								Orange Flowers qt.				10				
Cucumbers for Stew-									Magnolia Flow. doz.				3				
ing - dish		3					3		Figs - doz.						2		
Peas -					1				Grapes - basket				1				
Lettuce -		1					1		Guava Fruit - doz.					2			
Endive -					1				Damsons - qt.				8				
Red Cabbage -							1		Apples for Jelly, bush.						2		
White Celery -		1				1											
Tomatoes -			1						Kitchen Fruit.								
Horseradish - dish					1		1		Apples - peck	2				2			
Onions -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Waste Peaches -				9				
Shallots -		1					1		Plums - qt.						1		
Leeks -	1						1		Cherries - lb.				1½				
Garlic -			1						Currants -		1					1	
Parsley, Curled, bun.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Raspberries -		1					1	
Sweet Marjoram -		1					1		Pears for stewing da.				2				
Sweet Basil -			1				1		Apples for roasting						2		
Fennel -					1												
Tarragon -	1					1			Table Fruit.								
Green Mint -			1						Pine-apples								
Chervil -	1	1			1	1	1	1	Brown Sugar-loaf		1						
Sorrel -			1				1		Queen -					1			
Winter Savory -	1								Otakeke -							1	
Chives -						1			Cycas revoluta -	9					7		
Pennyroyal -					1				Moss Cavendishii -				7		7		
Salad for Servants.									Guava Fruit -					9		9	
Cucumbers - dish	1		1			1	1		Black Hamburg								
Lettuce -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Grapes - lb.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Radishes -		1			1		1		Sweetwater, Dutch	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pickings.									Muscat of Alexandria		1		1		1		
Gherkin Cucumbers						200			Peaches, Malta -	4				5		5	
Onions, silver-skin-									Figs - dish	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
ned - peck					1				Cherries -		1		1		1		
Red Cabbage - doz.							1		Keen's seedl. Straw-								
Capicums -					200				berries -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Chillies -									Red Currants -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Green Tomatoes doz.		6							White ditto -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ripe Tomatoes for									Apples -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sauce - doz.						7			Pears -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cut Flowers, basket	1								Walnuts -	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
									Melons -	1	10	1					
									Impératrice Plums					1	1	1	
									Ice -								

Source: James Barnes, 'Art II, Bicton Gardens, their Culture and Management. In a Series of Letters to the Conductor', GM 19 (1842), 555-567, 557.

Loudon admired this comprehensive list and not only printed it in the *Gardener's Magazine* but also in *Self-Instruction for Young Gardeners* and recommended that young gardeners adopt a similar style of record-keeping.¹¹³ He noted:

It will be observed that the gardens at Bicton are on a very large scale: and that consequently few gardens will need so extensive a Kitchen-Book as that from which the above example is extracted; it is, however, always useful to have some memorial of the produce sent in by the Gardener for the use of the house, as the Gardener is sometimes blamed for the non-productiveness of his department, while the fault, in fact, lies in the wastefulness or carelessness of the cook, or some other person belonging to the establishment.¹¹⁴

In the above comments Loudon effectively warned young gardeners about the rivalries they might find existing between different departments on large estates, particularly between those who worked indoors and those who worked outside. This was especially true of the rivalries between kitchen staff and kitchen garden staff, in particular over how vegetables should be presented by the gardeners to the kitchen:

It is not a part of their [kitchen domestics] duty to be topping and tailing in the scullery what should have been topped and tailed in the garden shed, and the rubbish disposed of summarily, instead of going to the kitchen only to be brought out again.¹¹⁵

The *Gardener's Magazine* recommended that when produce was sent to the kitchen that it 'ought to look as clean and bright as if prepared for the exhibition table'.¹¹⁶

Records were needed to itemise costs and receipts, inventories of tools, orders to tradesmen and sowing and harvesting information.¹¹⁷ Other important records that were kept by the head gardener included keeping the wages book. These were records of each person's work. Some were very comprehensive and outline who was working where. Others were very simple with columns for the workmen the number of days they had worked and how much they were paid by the day.¹¹⁸ Where comprehensive records remain, such as at Endsleigh, it is possible not only to identify those who worked in the garden, but also the foremen. As has been seen they were paid a few pence more than the rest of the men. It is rare that the head gardener's name is recorded unless he signed the accounts.

Many gardens were fully or partially self-supporting units. Surplus produce was sold to local people and at nearby markets. From 1819 to 1822 Thomas Smiles, the kitchen gardener at Powderham, kept a record of the produce sold. This included fruit,

vegetables and potted plants such as geraniums, camellias, jasmine, heaths, rhododendrons and violets. In August 1821, over a series of 103 transactions, he sold produce worth £39.13s.9d. December was the quietest month where sales were only 11s 4d, but over the year the income amounted to £116.9s.10d; more than enough to offset his salary of £60 plus board wages of 16s a week.¹¹⁹ His records show the variety of fruit, vegetables and flowers that were being grown and marketed which included named varieties of fruit which were grown for dessert, for cooking and for keeping; apples were also used to make cider.¹²⁰ Produce was taken from Powderham to the market at Exeter up to three times a week.

Gardens near Plymouth sold their produce at Dock market. Gardener's wives from Kitley and Maristow were paid up to one shilling a day to attend the market to sell produce paying a standing charge which not only covered their 'stall', but was also the equivalent of car-parking for a horse.¹²¹ In 1854, fruit was also sold direct from Kitley to Mrs Briggs, Mrs Burgoyne and Mrs Cowley, all fruiterers at Plymouth. This included gooseberries, black and red currants, apples, peaches, nectarines, Rodney plums, Moorfowl egg pears, cucumbers and small melons.¹²² Wiscombe Park at Southleigh sold potatoes, gooseberries, strawberries, currants, raspberries, mangold, apples and the grass off the pleasure ground in 1879 raising £5.8s.10d in the period from July to November. The following year they also sold apples and peaches to a Mrs Carter.¹²³

In 1820 celery and horseradish were sold by sticks, potatoes and beans by pecks or bags, beetroot by the dozen, spinach and greens by the basket. Onions and seakale by weight, broccoli by the dozen, apples by the hundred and 'small' fruits, strawberries, gooseberries and raspberries in pints or quarts.¹²⁴ Nurserymen's invoices show the variety of seeds and plants that were purchased for kitchen gardens.

Produce was not only supplied to the kitchen, but also to the family when residing at their other homes. Sir Charles Cave built Sidbury Manor as a summer home, but the family was only in occupation for about three months of the year. However, when they were at Stoneleigh, Clifton, another of his homes, produce was despatched from Sidbury Manor's kitchen garden by John Reynolds, the head gardener, twice a week. This would probably have included cut flowers from the extensive range of glasshouses.¹²⁵ As seen above, partially for their own protection, most head gardeners kept a record of what was dispatched and when.

The Competitive World of the Head Gardener – Trialling Plants

If a head gardener settled in one position for a long time, there was the opportunity to concentrate on plant breeding and hybridisation. This was part of the process of scientific enquiry, but also an endeavour to improve plants for exhibition. As this was a long-term process it needed several years in a settled environment for experiments to be made and results written up. Frequently when new varieties were developed they were sold to nurserymen who would go on to propagate them commercially.

Head gardeners were responsible for trialling new varieties of plants either on behalf of nurserymen, or to improve a collection of one particular variety, by improving its hardiness, colour or usefulness. Plants and seeds arrived from abroad, some named, others numbered, with no more than brief notes as to the soil conditions they were found in. These were then grown under controlled conditions. Some were considered of 'little value' others 'nondescript'. Those judged to be of value or of interest to growers or botanists were then sent to Kew for further trials.¹²⁶ An owner could gain great kudos if plants were developed in their garden especially if they won prizes at horticultural shows. Some prizes were noted in *The Times* as when James Barnes won a silver Horticultural Society Award for alstromerias grown at Bicton.¹²⁷ Naming plants after an owner or property showed the importance of a garden and kept it in public focus, for example, when Barnes developed a white strawberry, it was named the Bicton Pine. This was later sold by Lady Louisa Rolle to the Exotic Nursery in London in exchange for plants for her collection of exotics at Bicton, and when marketed by the nursery, it became a best seller. She also sold to Veitch, for £100, the winter flowering shrub *Colletia bictonensis* raised by Barnes.¹²⁸

Gardeners such as Barnes used their observations of what happened in nature to formulate ideas for use in the garden:

...we have only to go to any common, where the native heath grows for an example. They do not have soil sifted for them; they do not have all the stones picked out of the earth to make them grow: no; they grow amongst the stones and vegetation continually springing up round them; and decay with the season, with their roots about them to nourish them.¹²⁹

One of his experiments, widely publicised, involved ripening pineapples in the open air. This had a double benefit when it was proved possible, in that it increased knowledge of

the tolerance of pineapple plants, but also enabled 'a fruiting house to be cleared in May, and immediately converted into a succession house, instead of remaining full of fruiting plants until August'.¹³⁰ Barnes also took part in experiments, supervised by the Royal Horticultural Society, to prove that the potato blight could be perpetuated through seed potatoes which themselves had been affected by the blight.¹³¹ These experiments were written up in horticultural journals both in Britain and America as people were eager to learn the latest scientific advances.¹³² Lady Rolle, who was a fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society, encouraged experimentation. She was sufficiently interested in the garden at Bicton to bid for rare exotics in the RHS annual auctions.¹³³

The press reported on unusual plants raised by gardeners for their owners, for example:

There is now growing in the green-house of Mrs Wells, Cowley House, a beautiful specimen of the *Musa Cavendishii* commonly called the Bread-fruit Tree 7½ feet, 100 pips as fruit. This benevolent lady's hot-houses boast many other rare exotics, all of which evince highly the ability, great care and vigilant superintendence of Mr John Yole the gardener.¹³⁴

At Saltram, in 1802, the American aloes aroused the interest of the *Exeter Flying Post*. In August the newspaper reported on the rarity of these plants blooming, claiming only two had flowered in the previous century and alerting 'the curious in botany' to the fact that two of the plants were due to flower that year. The publicity was such that, 'the gardens [at Saltram] are constantly crowded this fine weather, with spectators, to view this rare phenomenon in the vegetable world'.¹³⁵ A constant stream of visitors offering tips for the privilege of visiting the plants, helped swell the gardener's income.

Competition at Horticultural shows

One area of influence for the head gardener was through horticultural societies. The Devon and Exeter Horticultural and Botanical Society with Lord Clifford as its first President, was launched in 1829 to establish a society for the 'promotion and encouragement of useful and ornamental horticulture' with, initially, two shows a year.¹³⁶ These societies were firstly aimed at the wealthy, but gradually as more and more societies came into being, there was a horticultural show for everybody, the commercial grower, the hobbyist, the nurseryman, the amateur, and classes too for cottage gardeners and allotment holders. By the end of the nineteenth century there was

a horticultural or cottage garden society in virtually every parish in Devon which catered for all classes of gardener from working gardeners to working class amateurs.

Theoretically, membership of the county societies was open to head gardeners and owners as well as amateur gardeners, but the subscription fee of one guinea would have proved prohibitive to most journeymen. However, in 1883 the committee of the Devon and Exeter Society met with a deputation of gardeners who had requested a reduction of fees for working men. It was agreed, not only that there should be three levels of subscriptions, '5s., 10s 6d., and 21s., with proportionate advantages', but also that 'the annual subscription of 5s. do qualify a practical gardener for the committee'.¹³⁷ The resultant committee consisted of nine 'working gardeners', listed by surname only, three proprietors of Exeter nurseries, obviously considered to be a cut above working gardeners and a mix of local gentlemen.¹³⁸ The 'working gardeners', all head gardeners, have been identified as [Thomas] Bartlett, Knightleys, Exeter St David; [George] Coles, gardener to James Lawless, Exeter; [William] Craggs, Winslade, Clyst St Mary; [James] Enstone, Wear House, Topsham; [Frederick] Geeson, Haldon House, Exeter, [George] Lock, Newcombes, Crediton; [David] Powell, Powderham Castle; [Walter] Rowland, Parkerswell, Exeter and [George] Underdown, Escot, Talaton.

In Devon, initially, gardeners were rewarded with prizes and credited with the work needed to bring items up to show standards. For example, Herman Saunders won a total of four guineas at the second exhibition of the Devon and Exeter Horticultural and Botanical Society show in 1829.¹³⁹ Richard Saunders, (Luscombe), Mr Nicholls (Winslade), Mr Reid (Montrath House), Mr Craggs, (Killerton), and many others were also acknowledged for winning prizes at one of the early shows.¹⁴⁰ However, by 1846, increasingly it was the owner who was awarded the prizes and accolade of winning, although, in some cases, 'a Premium [was] added for the Gardener, as a testimonial of unusual skill displayed in its cultivation.'¹⁴¹

The horticultural show was the culmination of the gardening year. This created an opportunity for gardeners to demonstrate expertise to gardening colleagues and potential employers. Shows and exhibitions were meeting places, not only of local and regional men, but in the case of the national shows of head gardeners from around the country. Head gardeners also had the opportunity to demonstrate floral decoration skills:

the tents ...were beautified by splendid collections of hothouse flowers and plants from the gardens of Mr Cleave, Sir John Shelley, Sir H. F. Davie, and Colonel Sir Redvers Buller, which were the theme of general admiration.

The judges on this occasion were Mr Teed, gardener to Mrs Ensor of Exeter, Mr Luxton, from Lucombe and Pince's nurseries, Exeter, Mr Lock, head gardener to Mr Cleave and Mr Bull, head gardener to Sir Redvers Buller.¹⁴² Some owners paid the fares of gardeners to attend shows and the fact that the glory was reflected onto the owner is demonstrated in how the shows were written up in the local press.

Although journeymen were not members of the horticultural societies, they were encouraged to attend exhibitions and the Escot account also records payment for admission to the Agricultural Exhibition of one shilling each for six garden men in May 1878.¹⁴³ They would certainly have had a vested interest in exhibitions as a commentator on the Exeter Flower Show noted in 1891:

Few persons outside gardening circles have the least idea of the burning spirit of emulation which possesses the souls of these gardeners who compete for the "tall" prizes such as the silver cup given by Messrs. Veitch. Months of toil, watchfulness, and anxiety, years of painstaking effort and experience are brought into play, and the contagious spirit of enthusiasm which makes a man fight for victory are all at work in these inter-county competitions.¹⁴⁴

This also caused problems in that:

Much has been said respecting the laborious and responsible situation of gardeners, compared with that of some other servants in a gentleman's family; but what adds greatly to the pain, and, I may say, often constitutes the degradation, of the gardener, is the practice of many of their employers, who are members of these societies, who receive the prizes that are in reality gained by their gardeners.

This was written by 'A Complaining Gardener' who went on to maintain that many head gardeners had actually purchased winning specimens, 'at his own expense'.¹⁴⁵ Unfortunately, he was correct in his assumptions as witnessed by a letter to *The Devonport Independent* published by Mr J. Williams, as a warning to others to shun so detestable an example:

I am under the painful necessity of informing you that I have discovered that all the Prizes obtained by my Gardener for articles produced at the last Horticultural meeting at Plymouth, as coming from my garden, were not so; viz the Strawberries and Cherries, but that he purchased them before he went to the meeting. It has only come to my knowledge very lately, and I have discharged

him from my employ. By way of encouragement I have always given him the Prize money, not thinking he would act in this manner.¹⁴⁶

In June 1863 John Tidball of Escot was paid his expenses [5s 0d] to go to the Devon and Exeter Botanical and Horticultural Society exhibition in Exeter as were his two under-gardeners Ireland and Solomon Baker [2s 6d each]. Overtime payments paid to the men at the end of May suggest they were attending as exhibitors as well as spectators.¹⁴⁷ Although the head gardener or the owner would have been the person officially competing the reputation of the whole garden staff would have been at stake.

Those men who became too successful at winning prizes, were frequently asked to become judges, not only at the prestigious Devon and Exeter Horticultural Society exhibitions, but also at the smaller cottage garden and allotment society events. Their names appeared year after year in local newspaper reports and, as a result, they became as well known locally as their masters. Robert Cleall of Nutwell Court regularly judged at shows from September 1846 to 1881, John Garland of Killerton was a judge for over thirty years from 1862 to 1893 and Henry Beddard of Streatham Court, who came to Devon from Enville Hall in Staffordshire, was a judge from June 1869 to August 1879, the length of time he spent in the county. Philip Lang was a judge for at least twelve years and James Enstone, Gardener at Weir House, for almost twenty years. They were not just judges, but advisors too. They encouraged cottage gardeners and allotment holders to grow a wider selection of produce, donating seeds and wisdom in equal measures.

Competition for prizes in shows led to innovation and improvement of plants and equipment and led to a tendency to produce the largest, although not necessarily the tastiest of produce. These items were frequently displayed in windows of nurserymen as advertisements for their stock and were often reported in the local newspapers. For example:

Six splendid peaches were exhibited last week in the window of Messrs Veitch, High Street Exeter, which were grown by Mr Hitt, gardener to Mark Kennaway Esq., and which weighed no less than twelve ounces each.¹⁴⁸

A single potatoe [sic] planted and managed by the gardener of James Winter Esq., of Stoke has this season produced the astonishing crop of 151 potatoes, the whole weighing 34 lbs.¹⁴⁹

Mr Mogridge, seedsman has now in his possession a very extraordinary flat-poll cabbage, grown this summer by Samuel Moore, gardener of New Invention, near Dulverton. It weighs 56 lbs: the leaf is three feet one inch in length.¹⁵⁰

Even head gardeners of prestigious gardens were not immune to the race to provide the largest fruit and vegetables.

Monster Pine Apples – Mr Barnes, Gardener to Lady Rolle, at Bicton, some time since forwarded three magnificent Queen Pine Apples, weighing 20 pounds 2 ounces, to the Horticultural Exhibition at Paris.¹⁵¹

Horticultural shows demonstrated the breadth of a gardener's abilities. They were an opportunity for head gardeners and owners to display rare plants, for example the cacti from Real del Monto or the Manito tree shown at the North Devon Horticultural Society in Barnstaple in 1838.¹⁵²

Communication Between Gardeners

Throughout the nineteenth century a growing number of gardening journals, books and pamphlets were printed.¹⁵³ All were designed to educate and inform. Encouraged by a demand for knowledge, the market was flooded with horticultural books, some with titles so long there was no doubting the content.¹⁵⁴ These wordy books gave practical and theoretical advice to their readers and whetted their appetites for the new, unusual and spectacular plants described within.

Gardening could be a lonely occupation and horticultural magazines and journals gave professional gardeners an opportunity to share information, knowledge, experience and ideas with each other through letters of advice and articles about their own particular interests. Editors passed on news of the latest plant imports, the newest techniques and inventions; nurseries advertised their wares. Correspondents commented on gardens superintended by their colleagues and publicised their own gardens.¹⁵⁵ Gardening journals gave the opportunity to offer services, or find a new position through the 'situations wanted' columns.¹⁵⁶

Through their writings gardeners had the opportunity to influence fashion and taste. Joan Morgan and Alison Richards record the achievements of some of these men, especially those who specialised in fruit and vegetable growing.¹⁵⁷ They note that:

...food connoisseurship was fast becoming one of the hallmarks of sophisticated society driven in part by head gardeners who extended the growing season to ensure herbs and fresh vegetables were always to hand, and rarities such as pineapples, melons and grapes were readily available.¹⁵⁸

In their letters, head gardeners not only gave advice on how to grow produce, but also how to use it in the kitchen with recipes which varied from a tomato sauce for cold meat or how to make quince jam.¹⁵⁹

Loudon solicited articles for the *Gardener's Magazine*, both by general appeals 'to nurserymen, curators of botanic gardens, and gardeners having the care of private collections' or through specific requests to individuals.¹⁶⁰ In Devon Robert Reid of Montrath House, John Nash of Arlington, Glendinning and Barnes of Bickton, Richard Saunders of Luscombe Castle and Herman Saunders of Kitley were just some of the gardeners who responded.¹⁶¹ Devon gardeners, after all, had the advantage of a good climate for growing exotics in the open ground. They were, therefore, able to write knowledgeably about plants that gardeners elsewhere had difficulty in growing.¹⁶² Richard Saunders, for example, contributed a detailed article listing over thirty 'exotics' which he grew in the open at Luscombe Castle in Dawlish. These included camellias which were thought to be tender, but which did well under his regime of keeping their roots warm.¹⁶³

Letters and articles to the gardening press helped ensure that regional head gardeners became known to a wider audience than that gained through attendance at local horticultural shows. Editors re-printed articles from other journals and newspapers and, in turn, regional newspapers such as the *Exeter Flying Post* borrowed quotations, or complete articles, which were contributed by Devon gardeners or featured Devon gardens.¹⁶⁴ As horticultural journals such as the *Gardener's Magazine* and *Gardener's Chronicle* were aimed at a readership of garden owners as well as the working gardener, this was an added incentive for the gardener to acquire a knowledgeable and professional background.

In his study of head gardeners Toby Musgrave used garden journals to research some of the better known men in Britain, mostly notably Joseph Paxton, brothers, David Taylor and Robert Fish, and John Fleming, all of whom had contributed regularly to the gardening press.¹⁶⁵ However, he ignores the lesser known head gardeners except to

mention, briefly, that urbanisation provided openings 'for different kinds of headship'.¹⁶⁶ His chapter on James Barnes is based on articles contributed throughout his lifetime, including a series of letters published in the *Gardener's Magazine* during the years 1842 and 1843, which followed a visit to Bicton of the editor John Loudon.¹⁶⁷ Garden writers and influential designers were responsible for the spread of knowledge to working gardeners and garden owners. James Burge, gardener to the Reverend Richard Lane at Coffleet, Brixton, sent, 'a recipe for composing a Liquid for effectually destroying Caterpillars, Ants, Worms, and other Insects' to the very first *Gardener's Magazine* in 1826. Another contributor to this edition was Herman Saunders of Kitley who wrote, 'some account of the Kitley Shaddock'.¹⁶⁸ Loudon knew many garden writers personally through the tours he made around the country. Horticultural journals gave a forum for crusaders for better wages, working and living conditions.

Not all advice was given in serious mode though as the quote below demonstrates. Sometimes humour helped make a point, especially in the matter of health and safety:

The Intricacies of a Wheelbarrow. If you have occasion to use a wheelbarrow, leave it, when you are through with it, in front of the house with the handles toward the door. A wheelbarrow is the most complicated thing to fall over on the face of the earth. A man will fall over one when he would never think of falling over anything else. He never knows when he has got through falling over it, either; for it will tangle his legs and his arms, turn over with him and rear up in front of him, and just as he pauses in his profanity to congratulate himself, it takes a new turn, and scoops more skin off of him, and he commences to evolve anew, and bump himself on fresh places. A man never ceases to fall over a wheelbarrow until it turns completely on its back, or brings up against something it cannot upset. It is the most inoffensive-looking object there is, but it is more dangerous than a locomotive, and no man is secure with one unless he has a tight hold of its handles, and is sitting down on something. A wheelbarrow has its uses, without doubt, but in its leisure moments it is the great blighting curse on true dignity.¹⁶⁹

Barnes' own accessible style of writing, made it possible for other gardeners to identify with his experiences and allowed him to pass on knowledge through his letters. He used his background as a youngster learning his trade to full advantage as an adult in charge of his own garden at Bicton, even when apparently keeping up the appearance of conforming to traditional practices, which many other head gardeners must have done as well. For example:

The first time the thought occurred to me of using rough soil was when I was about eleven years old. I went with my father one morning, at five o'clock, to

where there were some heaps of mould of different sorts, to assist him to chop it down, and fill the sieves. I remember as well the very spot, and what passed, as if it had happened this day; for I got very hungry towards eight o'clock, and fancied breakfast-time would never come. I asked my father if the mound would not do to grow cucumbers in if we were to chop it down, and knock it to pieces with the back of the spade, and pick out the stones. He asked me how I could think of such a thing; and told me to make haste and fill the sieve, or the job would not be finished by breakfast-time: and it was more than half-past eight before it was, and my basin of bread and milk was nearly cold when I got home. However, in time, I kept thinking I would try if plants would not grow in mould without sifting. I begged a cucumber plant of my father, made a bed of any rubbish I could get, put a quantity of earth, rough as it was, for them to grow in, and succeeded in getting a famous crop, and sold enough to buy myself a new hat. However, no more notice was taken of it. We continued to sift mould for every thing except melons, both at home and wherever I worked as journeyman: but I always kept thinking, if ever I should be a master myself, I would see if things would not grow without the earth being sifted; and I have since many times been ridiculed for using it in such a rough state, but I passed it off by saying I had not time to sift it.¹⁷⁰

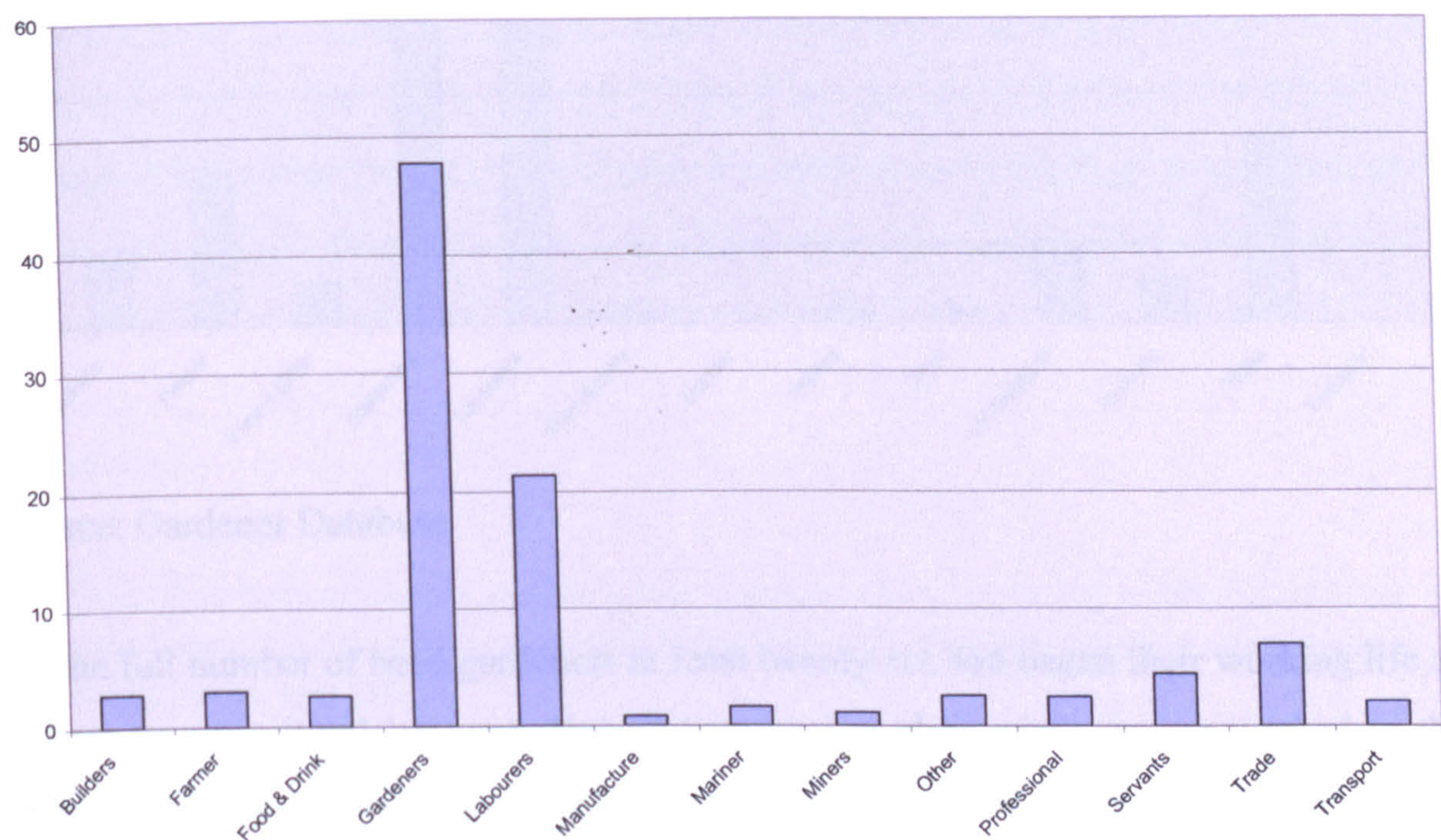
It was felt to be important to pass on knowledge and gardeners such as John Garland at Killerton, Alfred George at Bicton, William Pearson at Castle Hill and David Powell at Powderham had the opportunity to train young gardeners and the satisfaction of knowing that many of them went on to become head gardeners themselves. Head gardeners William Gillies at Stevenstone, Alfred Johnston at Knightshayes and Thomas Pender of Sharpham, trained at Powderham, Castle Hill and Bicton respectively.¹⁷¹ When Alfred George left Bicton after eleven years as head gardener, he joined Devon County Council as a lecturer. He was also a regular speaker with the Gardeners' Mutual Improvement Association and continued to pass on his knowledge to younger gardeners.¹⁷²

Fathers and Sons - Succession

In some respects, the garden was a class-less society in that it was possible for a determined man to go from being little more than an agricultural labourer to the top of his profession and straight into the middle class. Although this was harder towards the end of the nineteenth century, it was still possible. If, as Loudon suggested, a gardener was of higher status than an agricultural labourer, then almost fifty per-cent of gardeners on the database where their fathers occupation is known (1,041 or just over fourteen per-cent of the total) started with an advantage in that their fathers were also gardeners. Twenty one per cent (451) came from a labouring class background and seven per cent

from a trade background (see Figure 4:7). However, at least 2.2 per cent (54) came from professional backgrounds, these included farm bailiffs, members of the police and medical profession. Twice that number had parents who were in service. Parental occupations reflect the occupations in Devon with parents as fishermen, farmers, in the navy or working at the dockyard, miners and railway workers.

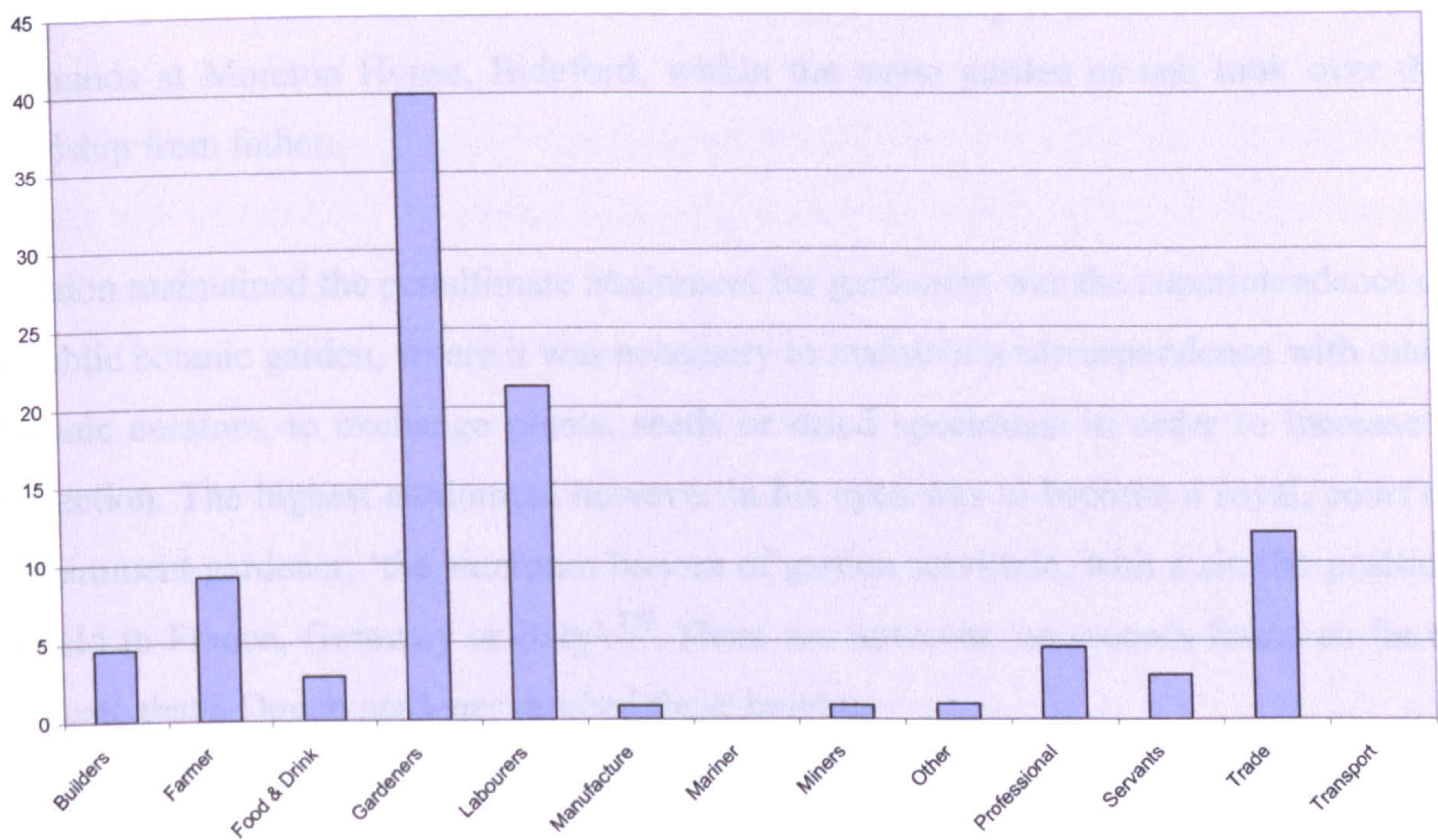
Figure 4:7. Fathers’ professions in percentages for all gardeners where known¹⁷³



Source: Gardener Database.

Of the head gardeners listed on the database, the parents’ occupation has only been identified for about seventeen per cent of the total (109 men). Forty per cent of these were gardeners, fifteen of whom were head gardeners themselves. However, while not being a direct comparison, there was a higher percentage of farmer’s sons than for all the gardeners, 9.2 per cent as opposed to 3.1 per cent and a higher number from a trade background (see Figures 4.7 and 4.8). Sons of gardeners might have come from more than one generation of gardeners, for example, Elias Dawe, a head gardener at Pitt House, Hennock followed in his father’s footsteps. John Dawe had been gardener and bailiff at Pitt House for the Buck family since 1861. His father, Elias’ grandfather, another Elias, was a gardener at Plympton St Mary until his death in 1861. Just over twenty-one per cent of head gardeners (twenty-three) came from backgrounds where their parents were agricultural labourers; the remainder included carpenters, masons, shoemakers and a blacksmith. Five head gardeners came from a professional background.

Figure 4.8. Fathers' professions in percentages of head gardeners where known



Source: Gardener Database

Of the full number of head gardeners at least twenty-six had begun their working life as a farm or agricultural labourer. Not all became top class gardeners, or worked in the most prestigious of gardens, although Robert Cawse worked at Kitley and Flete, Henry Dunn, whose father was a thatcher, was head at Sharpham in 1891 and John Eames at Powderham in 1871. John Simmons began his garden work at Eggesford with the then, head gardener Frederick Geary who was his cousin, but left the county to become a head gardener at Eastbourne. All reached the top of their profession, despite their lowly background and the fact that they all started work as farm or agricultural labourers. James Barrow worked first as an agricultural servant, then a general servant. By the time the 1901 census was taken he, aged 53, had changed his profession to ‘gardener’ and boarded at St George’s Street in Exeter, having been made head gardener to the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, a position he held until his retirement.¹⁷⁴

If a father was also a head gardener, there was far more chance of success. Reuben Cavill, whose own father had been an agricultural labourer had worked as head gardener at Woodcot, Pamflete and Gnaton Hall. His son Frederick, after training in Yorkshire, eventually became head at Flete. Eli and Robert Underdown, sons of George at Escot, became heads of Pynes and Colhayes House respectively. William Craggs was son of George Craggs, head at Weir House, Topsham. He became head gardener at Killerton,

and James Griffin, head at Cowley House, started work with his father who was head at Eggesford. All these men followed in their father's footsteps. In the case of William Edmunds at Moreton House, Bideford, within the same garden as son took over the headship from father.

Loudon maintained the penultimate attainment for gardeners was the superintendence of a public botanic garden, where it was necessary to maintain a correspondence with other botanic curators, to exchange plants, seeds or dried specimens in order to increase a collection. The highest attainment however in his eyes was to become a royal, court or government gardener, 'the summum bonum of garden servitude, with a similar position if held in France, Germany or Italy'.¹⁷⁵ There are however, no records found so far to indicate that a Devon gardener reached these heights.

Summary

More than half of the success of gardening springs from doing everything at the right time. The other half comes of doing things in a proper manner, and placing things in the best places.¹⁷⁶

The role of a head gardener changed radically throughout the nineteenth century. On estates with discrete departments with their own foremen and staff, the professional head gardeners superintended an increasingly professional staff. Changes of personnel were normal on large estates. The head gardener could move men around his own garden or send them elsewhere. Although the status, working conditions and salary improved throughout the century, head gardeners continued to lack the income that other men in supervisory roles could attain. However, as a superintendent of a large garden there were plenty of opportunities to enhance their basic salary and many head gardeners became wealthy as a result of the rise through their profession.

Social mobility for a head gardener was limited by the number of prestigious gardens. As has been seen, once in a settled position many gardeners did not move again for many years. This had the result of blocking the promotion of some young gardeners and hence was another reason why they needed to move out of the county to find work. Once at the top of their profession, there were few opportunities for advancement other than a move to a more prestigious garden. However, skills gained in domestic gardens

could be put to use as proprietors of a market garden, a nursery or to become a superintendent of a park, cemetery or botanic garden.

The position of a head gardener was frequently not just a job, but a way of life. Their loyalty was probably to the garden first, owner second. As they lived on site, they saw 'their' garden every day, in every season, through all weathers. Once settled, many remained in a garden for the rest of their lives or until they retired, taking the opportunity to become known as plant breeders, judges or correspondents. Within the gardening community, head gardeners became celebrities of the day. Despite the number of staff in a garden, the position of a head gardener could be a lonely one. There were few people to talk to on equal terms. The owner kept his distance both literally and metaphorically, especially if he or she was away from home a lot: the gardener was removed from his staff by the authority of his position. Yet, some men built close relationships with their employers, as has been seen where Mr James Lawless sold his collection of rare exotics rather than find a replacement gardener for Mr Coles who had fallen ill.¹⁷⁷ Correspondence in horticultural journals lessened the loneliness of gardeners who worked without colleagues or who were isolated on estates. It also encouraged competition and innovation. 'A gentleman's gardener,' according to Mr S. Heaton had to be 'an all-round man, and one that can undertake the management of any branch of horticulture with credit to himself and satisfaction to his employers'.¹⁷⁸

¹ A Member of the Aristocracy, *The Duties of Servants: A Practical Guide to The Routine of Domestic Service* (London, 1899), 52-53.

² Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (London & New York 1989), 3.

³ *Gardener's Chronicle (GC)* 21.11.1874, 656.

⁴ J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London, 1822), 1322.

⁵ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1200.

⁶ *Gardening World*, 27.05.1899.

⁷ *Exeter Flying Post (EFP)* 27.11.1867, 7f; *Census Enumerators' Returns (Census)* PRO HO107, Sidmouth, 1851; PRO RG11 *Poltimore*, 1881 [CD].

⁸ James Barnes, 'Letter XXI. System of Kitchen-Gardening continued. Culture of the Cabbage, Broccoli, Peas, Beans, Onion, Carrot, Parsnep, and Spinach', *Gardener's Magazine (GM)* 19 (1843), 540-546, 542.

⁹ Anne Meredith relates the difficulties faced by the Women's Farm and Garden Association in finding places for women gardeners. See Anne Meredith, 'Middle Class Women and Horticultural Education 1890-1939' unpublished thesis University of Sussex (2001), 215, 239; See also *EFP* 12.09.1891.

¹⁰ *Census* PRO RG13 Bignor, Sussex, Burstall, Suffolk, 1901.

¹¹ *Horticultural Directory* (1870); *Census* PRO RG10, RG13 Baildon, Yorkshire, 1871, Buckland Monochorum, 1891.

¹² DRO 961M/add E34; *Kelly's Directory* 1902.

¹³ *The Garden* 01.10.1892, 309; 02.12.1893, 525.

¹⁴ *EFP* 10.04.1845, 2g.

¹⁵ Jessica Gerard, *Country House Life: Family and Servants 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994), 180.

¹⁶ *EFP* 09.11.1889, 2f.

- ¹⁷ EFP 22.10.1889.
- ¹⁸ EFP 7.03.1891, 7c.
- ¹⁹ *The Times*, 13.12.1869, 11d; EFP 15.12.1869, 5f.
- ²⁰ GC 2.07.1887, 30, reported that Begbie, formerly of Ravensbury, was appointed to take charge of the estate of Mrs Milns at West End, Sunninghill [Berks]; *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener* 46 14.09.1871, 201-203; 21.09.1871, 221-223.
- ²¹ EFP 01.08.1877, 4a.
- ²² EFP 03.05.1871, 7f.
- ²³ DRO 1260F/HA130.
- ²⁴ William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon including the City of Exeter* (Sheffield and London, 1878-9); *Census PRO RG12 Ilfracombe*, 1891.
- ²⁵ EFP 30.04.1898, 16.07.1898.
- ²⁶ EFP 16.07.98.
- ²⁷ EFP 25.05.1843.
- ²⁸ Malcolm Dunn, 'The Relations Between Gardeners and Their Employers', *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society (JRHS)* 17 (1894), 89.
- ²⁹ DRO 1508M/London/Family Household and Personal/10 *Estimated cost of keeping the Gardens in hand at Powderham Castle* 7 February 1860. Labour allowed included 3 men, 2 women and 1 boy.
- ³⁰ Clare Greener, 'Investigating the Role of the Devon Gardener', MA dissertation, University of Exeter, 2000, 50.
- ³¹ Somerset Record Office (SRO) DD\CM/37 Gardener's Book.
- ³² Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1210.
- ³³ See EFP 11.09.1800; EFP 14.04.1803; EFP 9.06.1803. This was also a role undertaken by Alexander Mackay at Maristow, 1861, Philip Lang at Poltimore, 1871 and William Gullick at Kelly. See, *Kelly's Directory* (1883); *Census PRO RG11 Kenn*, 1881.
- ³⁴ DRO 961M/M/E34; EFP 21.01.1885, 7c.
- ³⁵ GC 21.11.1874, 655.
- ³⁶ PWDRO 874/3/2; DRO L1258M/V4/3; DRO 1148M add/Special Accounts/Veitch.
- ³⁷ S. Heaton, 'Gardeners – Past, Present, and Future', *JRHS* 20:1 (1896), 40-52, 48-49.
- ³⁸ When Ted Humphris started work in the garden on the Aynho estate in Northamptonshire, he was not permitted to speak to the head gardener unless the head gardener spoke first, and always had to address him as 'Sir'. See Ted Humphris, *Garden Glory* (London 1969), 36-39.
- ³⁹ Henry Bright mentions that 'probably no one would be allowed to gather flowers, for fear of spoiling the symmetry of the beds. See Henry A. Bright *The English Flower Garden* (London, 1881), 19. Arthur Hooper, *Life in the Gardeners' Bothy* (Suffolk, 2000), 9.
- ⁴⁰ *Duties of Servants*, 53.
- ⁴¹ Samuel and Sarah Adams, *The Complete Servant*, 1825, ed. By Ann Haly paperback edn (Sussex, 1993), 167.
- ⁴² J. C. Loudon, *The Suburban Gardener, and Villa Companion* (London and Edinburgh, 1838), 533-534.
- ⁴³ *Census PRO RG11, Teignmouth*, 1881.
- ⁴⁴ *Duties of Servants*, 52-53.
- ⁴⁵ See, for example, W.F.G. in *The Gardener's Magazine* 27.01.1872, 54.
- ⁴⁶ Heaton, 'Gardeners', *JRHS* 20:1 (1896), 51.
- ⁴⁷ Gerard, *Country House*, 163.
- ⁴⁸ See *Census PRO RG11 Collipriest, Bickham, Flete*, 1881.
- ⁴⁹ *Census PRO RG9-10 Fremington*, 1861, 1871.
- ⁵⁰ DRO 316M/EA/20.
- ⁵¹ Robert Cridge was gardener to William Pike at Elm Grove House Dawlish, and Samuel Frost gardener at Cambrian, Teignmouth; *Census PRO RG10-11, Dawlish*, 1871, Teignmouth 1881.
- ⁵² *Census PRO HO107, RG10-11 Devon*, 1871, 1881.
- ⁵³ *Census PRO HO107, RG9 Holbeton* 1841, 1851, 1861.
- ⁵⁴ EFP 14.05.1846.
- ⁵⁵ J.C. Loudon, *The Suburban Horticulturist* (London, 1842), 224.
- ⁵⁶ EFP 6.12.1866, 5d.
- ⁵⁷ A Common Sense Reforming Gardener, 'On the Evil Effects of a Head Gardener being lodged any where else than in his Garden' in *GM* 1 (1826), 135-6, 135.
- ⁵⁸ *Census PRO RG10 Devon*, 1871.
- ⁵⁹ Clinton Devon Estate Archives, Uncatalogued letter from Lady Louisa Rolle to Mr Daw, postmarked 22nd May 1837.
- ⁶⁰ Clinton Devon Estate Archives, Uncatalogued *Office Copy Affidavit of Sir John J B Duckworth and Mr Coldridge as to repairs of Gardeners Cottage and the Temple at Bickton*.

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- ⁶¹ ART. IX. Design for a Gardener's House, containing Five Rooms and an Office, adapted for being connected with the Wall of a Kitchen-garden' in *GM* 8 (1832), 551-554.
- ⁶² *GM* 5 (1831), 396-7.
- ⁶³ Charles McIntosh, *The Book of the Garden Vol 1 Structural* (Edinburgh and London, 1853), 49.
- ⁶⁴ *EFP* 13.09.1871, 7f; 02.04.1873, 1b.
- ⁶⁵ *Census* PRO RG13 Tamerton Foliot, 1901.
- ⁶⁶ Archibald John Stephens, *The Law of Nisi Prais: Evidence in Civil Actions, and Arbitrations and Awards* Vol 3 (London, 1842), 2346.
- ⁶⁷ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 376.
- ⁶⁸ *EFP* 13.09.1871; 02.04.1873.
- ⁶⁹ *Kelly's Directory* 1883; *Census* PRO RG13 Devon, 1901; *EFP* 27.08.1873.
- ⁷⁰ NDRO 1142B/EA68.
- ⁷¹ PWDRO 273/245.
- ⁷² DRO 1262M/L1241.
- ⁷³ NDRO 1142B/FP133 Mr John Oliver in account with Miss Arundel Yeo.
- ⁷⁴ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 8.
- ⁷⁵ DRO 96M/M/E34; Z19/20/36-37.
- ⁷⁶ PWDRO 874/3/38-43; DRO 7140 (96M) *North Devon Accounts 1869-1877 East Devon Rental and Account* 1887-1888.
- ⁷⁷ PWDRO 74/375; DRO 867B/E8/1.
- ⁷⁸ DRO 7140 (96M) *Henry Drew Account Book Bicton; North Devon Accounts 1869-1877*.
- ⁷⁹ DRO 7140 (96M) *Bicton Rental and Account* 1842, 1845, *East Devon Rental and Account* 1887, 1888, 1889; DRO Z19/20/36; NDRO B170 add 21/1.
- ⁸⁰ NDRO B170 add 36/2.
- ⁸¹ DRO 7140 (96M) *Rolle Estate North Devon Account* 1869, 1875.
- ⁸² *EFP* 29.06.1895, 6d; 27.07.1895, 3e.
- ⁸³ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 130.
- ⁸⁴ PWDRO 874/2/2.
- ⁸⁵ *Catalogue of the Works Exhibited in The British Section of The Exhibition – Paris Universal Exhibition* (1855), 5.
- ⁸⁶ *EFP* 2.04.1898; 16.06.1894.
- ⁸⁷ *Duties of Servants*, 53.
- ⁸⁸ PWDRO 3610Z and add/1-2.
- ⁸⁹ DRO L1258M/V4/4.
- ⁹⁰ *GM* 9 (1835), 51; Robert Glendinning, 'On the Culture of the Peach in the Open Air', *GM* 17 (1841), 63-72, 68.
- ⁹¹ Brent Elliott, *The Country House Garden*, 18; *Census* PRO HO107 1851.
- ⁹² *EFP* 16.10.1845.
- ⁹³ *EFP* 3.02.1875, 5d. [Reprint from *Gardener's Chronicle*]; *EFP* 23.12.1868, James Veitch received the second prize for this plan.
- ⁹⁴ DRO 1508M/London/Famly Household and Personal/10.
- ⁹⁵ PWDRO 874/24/2.
- ⁹⁶ PWDRO 69/M/7/28; DRO 961M/add E34.
- ⁹⁷ Cornwall Record Office (CRO) CY/1093.
- ⁹⁸ Enville Hall Archives garden labour books.
- ⁹⁹ East Sussex Record Office ASH/2014; PWDRO 69/M/7/28.
- ¹⁰⁰ SRO DD\DN/ 389 Copy of letter from W[illiam] Rowley to E. M. Hippisley.
- ¹⁰¹ DRO PR 514/39.
- ¹⁰² NDRO B170 add/50.
- ¹⁰³ *EFP* 26.09.1883, 5d.
- ¹⁰⁴ PWDRO 69/M/7/27.
- ¹⁰⁵ PWDRO 69/M/6/113.
- ¹⁰⁶ DRO 7140 (96M) *North Devon Accounts* (1877).
- ¹⁰⁷ DRO 7140 (96M) *North Devon Accounts* (1877); PWDRO 74/375; NDRO 1142B/FP 133.
- ¹⁰⁸ A Nobleman's Gardener, 'On the Conduct of Gardeners and their Employers with respect to giving and exchanging Plants and Seeds', *GM* 3 (1827), 291-2, 292.
- ¹⁰⁹ DRO 7140 (96M) *North Devon Accounts* (1877); PWDRO 407/Files3/F Radcliffe.
- ¹¹⁰ PWDRO 407/Files3/F Radcliffe; PWDRO 69/M/6/44/99.
- ¹¹¹ Adams and Adams, *Complete Servant*, 167.
- ¹¹² *GM* 18 (1842), 546.
- ¹¹³ See *GM* 19, 557.
- ¹¹⁴ J. C. Loudon, *Self Instruction for Young Gardeners* (London, 1847), 54.

- ¹¹⁵ *Gardener's Magazine*, 25.05.1872, 257.
- ¹¹⁶ *Gardener's Magazine*, 25.05.1872, 257.
- ¹¹⁷ J. C. Loudon, *The Horticulturist: or The Culture and Management of the Kitchen, Fruit and Forcing Garden* ed. by William Robinson (London & New York, 1871), 380.
- ¹¹⁸ PWDRO 69/M/6/155-156.
- ¹¹⁹ DRO 1508M/Account Books/V19; 1508M Devon/Estate/Account Books V4/F5.
- ¹²⁰ DRO 1508M/Account Books/V19.
- ¹²¹ PWDRO 74/ uncatalogued garden book 1889-1890; PWDRO 874/3/19; DRO 316M/EA/20.
- ¹²² PWDRO 74/729.
- ¹²³ DRO 337 add/364.
- ¹²⁴ DRO 1508M/Account Books/V19.
- ¹²⁵ *The Gardening World* 13 (1897), 377-378.
- ¹²⁶ Hooper, *Gardeners' Bothy*, 129.
- ¹²⁷ *The Times* 06.07.1840, 11a.
- ¹²⁸ *GC* 21.11.1874, 655.
- ¹²⁹ James Barnes, 'ART. V. Bicton Gardens, their Culture and Management. In a Series of Letters to the Conductor Letter III. The Heath-house. Potting in rough Soil and Training. Use of Fragments of Freestone and Pebbles. Lists of Heaths', *GM* 18 (1842), 617-621, 619.
- ¹³⁰ John Lindley, *Theory of Horticulture* (London, 1855), 101-2; See also *Annals of Horticulture* (1849), 40.
- ¹³¹ Robert Peel, *Memoirs* (London, 1857), 314/5.
- ¹³² See *The Magazine of Horticulture, Botany, and All Useful Discoveries and Improvements in Rural Affairs* 13 (Boston, 1847), 364-5.
- ¹³³ *Proceedings of the Royal Horticultural Society* 1 1.06.1859-31.12.1861, 42, 211.
- ¹³⁴ *EFP* 07.06.1838.
- ¹³⁵ *EFP* 12.08.1802, 30.09.1802, 11.11.1802.
- ¹³⁶ Besley, *The Post office Directory of Exeter and Suburbs* (1835); White, William, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon including The City of Exeter 2nd edn* (Sheffield and London, 1850), 91.
- ¹³⁷ *EFP* 21.02.1883, 7a.
- ¹³⁸ Gentlemen, R.N.G. Baker, W. Barnes, W. Brock, R.R.M. Daw, J. Dixon, W.H. Ellis, M. Farrant, R. J. Gray, T. W. Gray, J. Geare, A. K. Hamilton, J. Harding, J[ames] Lawless, H.C. Lloyd, H. Michelmores, C.B. Sanders, F. Townsend and H. Wilcocks. Nurserymen W. H. Sclater, R. T. Veitch, and Dr. Woodman of Lucombe and Pince.
- ¹³⁹ *EFP* 1.10.1829.
- ¹⁴⁰ Reprint of article from *Woolmer's Exeter Gazette*, 29.09.1830 in *GM* 5 (1830), 749-750.
- ¹⁴¹ *Torquay and Tor Directory* 22.05.1846, 5c.
- ¹⁴² *EFP* 01.08.1883, 7d.
- ¹⁴³ DRO 961M/add/E34.
- ¹⁴⁴ *EFP* 22.08.1891, 8c.
- ¹⁴⁵ A Complaining Gardener, *GM* 3 (1828), 360.
- ¹⁴⁶ PWDRO 74/507B/1-2. Write up of Royal Devon and Cornwall Horticultural Society in *Devonport Independent*.
- ¹⁴⁷ DRO B961M/M/E34; *EFP* 17.06.1863, 7b/c.
- ¹⁴⁸ *EFP* 19.08.1863, 5e.
- ¹⁴⁹ *EFP* 7.12.1837, 2e.
- ¹⁵⁰ *EFP* 11.11.1847, 2f.
- ¹⁵¹ *EFP* 6.11.1856, 5b.
- ¹⁵² *The Floricultural Cabinet and Florists' Magazine* VI (1838), 215.
- ¹⁵³ These included Loudon's *Gardeners Magazine* (est. 1826), Paxton's *Horticultural Register* (est. 1831), *Gardener's Chronicle*, established in 1841 by Joseph Paxton and John Lindley, Glenny's *Horticultural Magazine* (est 1845), *Cottage Gardener* edited by George. W. Johnson (est 1847). Shirley Hibberd's, *Floral World and Garden Guide* (est. 1858), *Gardener* (est 1867) edited by William Thomson, and William Robinson's *The Garden* (est 1871). For an extensive list of horticultural journals see Anne Wilkinson, *The Victorian Gardener: The Growth of Gardening and the Floral World*, Appendix 1 (Stroud, 2006), 211-214.
- ¹⁵⁴ See for example Standish and Noble of Bagshot, *Practical Hints on Planting Ornamental Trees With Particular Reference to Coniferae; in Which all the Hardy Species are Popularly Described and Their More Familiar Synonyms Given; Also, Descriptions of the Principal Other Kinds of Hardy Evergreen Trees and Shrubs, with Remarks on the Situation for which each is Best Adapted, and the Soil and Treatment it Requires; and Classified Lists of Such as are Best Adapted for Particular Soils and*

Situations to Which is Added, Instructions on the Cultivation of American Plants, and on the Rhododendrons of Sikkim-Himalaya (London, 1852).

¹⁵⁵ Herman Saunders, 'ART VI Some Account of the Kitley Shaddock', *GM* 1 (1826), 265-266; James Burgess 'ART VIII. Recipe for composing a Liquid for effectively destroying Caterpillars, Ants, Worms, and other Insects', *GM* 1 (1826), 389-390.

¹⁵⁶ *Journal of Horticulture*, 2479 (1896), 317.

¹⁵⁷ Joan Morgan and Alison Richards, *A Paradise out of a Common Field: The Pleasures and Plenty of the Victorian Gardener* repr. edn (New York, 1990).

¹⁵⁸ Morgan and Richards, *Paradise*, 21.

¹⁵⁹ *The Gardener*, 479, 591.

¹⁶⁰ See *GM* 7 (1831), 722; *GM* 18 (1842), 556.

¹⁶¹ Richard Saunders, 'Some Account of a Remarkable Lemon Tree in the Garden of C. Hoare Esq. at Luscombe, Devonshire', *GM* 2 (1827), 29-30; Robert Reid, 'Marica Northiana', *GM* 5 (1829), 661; Herman Saunders 'Kitley Shaddock', *GM* 1 (1826), 265-266.

¹⁶² *The Garden* 05.01.1895, 5. 'Spacious villa gardens' of Torquay contain sub-tropical plants such as palms, *dracaenas*, *horminums* and *Musa ensete* (banana).

¹⁶³ Richard Saunders, 'Art XV. List of Exotics which are now living in the Gardens of Charles Hoare, Esq., at Luscombe near Dawlish, in Devonshire', *GM* 8 (1832), 566-567.

¹⁶⁴ See for example, from *GC*, quotation from letter written by James Barnes of Bicton about the potato disease in, *EFP* 4.02.1847; details of the "Vegetable Collection Prize" of £10 won by John Garland, head gardener at Killerton in *EFP* 5.07.1871; and notes from David Powell of Powderham Castle on fruit growing in *EFP* 26.09.1883, 2f.

¹⁶⁵ Toby Musgrave, *The Head Gardeners: Forgotten Heroes of Horticulture* (London, 2007).

¹⁶⁶ Musgrave, *Head Gardeners*, 93.

¹⁶⁷ Musgrave, *Head Gardeners*, Chapter 8, and Appendix A.

¹⁶⁸ *GM*, 1 (1826), 265, 389; A shaddock is a large citrus fruit, similar to, but larger than an orange, smaller than a grapefruit.

¹⁶⁹ *The Gardener's Magazine*, 20.09.1873, 499, first printed in the *Danbury Newsman*.

¹⁷⁰ Barnes, 'Potting in rough Soil' *GM* 18 (1842), 617-621, 619-620.

¹⁷¹ *Census* PRO RG11, 14-15 Powderham, 1881, St Giles in the Wood and Filleigh, 1901; Filleigh 1911; *The Times* 3.06.1875, 3d. William Gillies, wrote a regular column advising on 'garden work' in the *St Giles-in-the-Wood Parish Magazine*. He also took an active role in children's education, working with the children at Wallingbrook school where his children attended, see DRO 4420M/Z9, 13-14.

¹⁷² DRO 7140 (96M) *Cash Book* 1872-1877, *East Devon Rental and Account* 1884; *EFP* 24.02.1894.

¹⁷³ Total number of gardeners with these details is 2,180.

¹⁷⁴ *Census* PRO RG10, Oare, Somerset, 1871; PRO RG12 High Bray, 1891; PRO RG13 Exeter, 1901; PRO RG14 Exeter 1911 (facsimile on internet).

¹⁷⁵ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1200.

¹⁷⁶ Joseph Shephard, *The Western Counties and Manure Company Limited Almanac* (1880), 5.

¹⁷⁷ *EFP* 26.09.1883, 5d.

¹⁷⁸ Heaton, 'Gardeners', *JRHS* 20:1 (1896), 40-52, 48.

PART TWO

COMMERCIAL GARDENERS

Gardening for Profit

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PART TWO

Gardening For Profit

For most men there were only two careers beyond that of head gardener. They could become market gardeners or nurserymen, in charge of their own business. This was an extension of the work they would have been doing managing a large garden, supplying surplus produce to local markets, hiring and firing man-power, ordering stock, overseeing production of, and experimenting with, different varieties of plants. As part of this progression he might offer his services as a landscape designer as did Edward Sparks of Tiverton and, more famously, John Veitch at Killerton.¹

Those who followed this route included Amaziah (also known as Emanuel) Saul, who came from Lincolnshire as head gardener at Castle Hill from at least 1850. In 1866 he was listed as a market gardener at Filleigh. Fifteen years later he was retired and living at Laurel Villas, Bishops Hull, Somerset.² William Spreadbury had been head gardener to Lord Portsmouth at Eggesford from 1868 to 1878. Although still only a young man of 38 he moved from there to take on the proprietorship of the Yeo Valley Hotel at Lapford, from where he also ran a business selling agricultural seeds. By March 1889 he had seed stores at both Lapford and Crediton, and retained his interest in gardening through judging at local shows.³

The second part of this thesis looks at commercial gardeners and compares the industry of market gardening with nurseries. Market gardens in the region have supplied local markets and the sea-ports for generations. Unlike the huge market gardens which surrounded London, Devon gardens tended to be small and family run with additional seasonal labour as and when needed. The majority of market gardens were situated near to Exeter and around Plymouth, but there were others spread throughout the county supplying smaller towns and villages. Records of market gardeners are scarce, the best being for the Tamar valley, half of which is in Cornwall, therefore the following chapter includes information from that region as well as for Devon. Much of the information gleaned would have applied to the Devon market gardeners in the Tamar valley and elsewhere.

CHAPTER FIVE

Market Gardeners

In small towns even to the present day the wants of those who cannot cultivate garden produce for themselves are supplied by small local farmers and gardeners, who bring in on market days such mixed loads of farm and garden produce as the successive seasons yield, and housewives largely attend such markets and purchase for themselves.⁴

Introduction

As with all other branches of gardening it is not easy to define a market gardener. There was often an overlap with jobbing gardeners, nurserymen, farmers and subsistence smallholders. In the nineteenth century Devon was a county with many small farms. Sarah Wilmot estimates that eleven percent were under twenty acres and nineteen percent under fifty acres which makes it even harder to distinguish between farmers and gardeners.⁵ From the census listings of 1881 it appears that many market gardeners considered themselves as farmers and, in places such as Bere Ferrers, would probably have been farmers before they began to grow strawberries and narcissi as their main crops. There were also farmer gardeners such as George Eveleigh of Sidmouth, William Cann of Brixham and Hannah Rossister of Sowton who combined both occupations. They grew agricultural crops, or were dairy or stockmen, but also supplied markets with vegetables, fruit or flowers.⁶ This enabled them to have cash crops to sell at local markets, while plant refuse and damaged crops also created fodder for over-wintering cattle which in turn provided manure for the land. These farmer gardeners would probably have cultivated their land using a plough, rather than spade labour.

The census had two categories of gardeners, 'domestic' for those who worked in a private garden and 'non-domestic' for commercial gardeners. The latter included nurserymen, seedsmen and florists. Market gardeners should therefore have been counted as 'non-domestic gardeners'. In the 1881 census the category 'gardener' was qualified, either by adding 'ND' for non-domestic gardeners, or by the use of codings laid down by government clerks. Order '7' was the section for 'persons engaged in agriculture', sub order '3' 'in gardens'.⁷ If gardeners coded as ND or 7/3 were counted as market gardeners and added to those already listed, the number would almost triple. However, some gardeners, including head gardeners, who worked on estates, as day or weekly workers, or even lived on the estate such as George Mudge at Cornwood, Reuben Cavill at Holbeton and John Franklin, gardener to Mrs Thornton West at

Streatham Hall, Exeter, were also listed as 'gardeners non-domestic'. This definition seemed as confusing for the individual responding to the census questionnaire as it is to researchers today.

There are no codings to help distinguish commercial from domestic gardeners in the 1851 census. Gardeners themselves did not seem to make a distinction at this time, although eighteen men listed as 'gardener' in this census were recorded as 'market gardener' elsewhere. Cross checking with contemporary directories also shows people listed as market gardeners who are entered in the census as farmers such as Philip May of Tamerton Foliot, Frederick Corber of Eggbuckland and William Cornish from Newton St Cyres. The number of non-domestic gardeners recorded for Devon by the census clerks increased from 2,199 in 1851 to 3,226 in 1881, but only a small proportion of these had stated their occupation as market gardener – 146 in 1851 and 292 in 1881.⁸

The problem of identification is compounded by the fact that many gardeners were listed in the census as having dual occupations. The first occupation was the one counted by the census clerks. When studying the Vale of Evesham gardening industry, J. M. Martin found that in two Pershore parishes twenty-eight per cent of market gardeners recorded dual occupations. When cross-referencing with directories, he found this was an underestimation of the numbers actually involved in the industry, although he does not say by how much.⁹ This is true for Devon also; census returns and directories that record dual occupations for market gardeners include dairymen/women, innkeepers, carpenters, thatchers, butchers, labourers, as well as connected occupations such as farmers, jobbing gardeners, carriers, shopkeepers, green grocers and florists (see Figure 5:1).¹⁰ It is logical that market gardeners should have dual occupations as carriers, barge men or market boat owners, because produce had to be transported to market. Many market gardeners sold their own produce direct to the public through shops, hence greengrocers, florists or shop-keepers. Cordwainers, miners, inn-keepers, brewers and cider-makers all had occupations that could be carried out alongside gardening. Some smaller producers such as William Cudmore at Great Torrington, John Mason at Tamerton Foliot and Joel Roberts at Stoke Damerel acted as labourers on nearby farms or in larger gardens to engender an additional income.¹¹

Figure 5:1. Some examples of market gardeners with dual occupations

Name	Other Occupation	Parish	Date	Source
Albion Maunder	Blacksmith	Kenton	1901	Census
Henry Miller	Milkman	Plymouth	1881	Census; White's
John Roberts	Dairyman	Plymouth	1851	Census
John Capron	Farmer	Heavitree	1866	Kelly's; Census
Matthew Tapp	Beer Retailer	Exminster	1851	Census; White's
Thomas Banfield	Innkeeper	Thorverton	1878	White's; Census
Joel Roberts	Jobbing Gardener	Devonport	1851	Census
James Pike	Thatcher	Alphington	1881	Census
John Siverage	Florist	Heavitree	1866	Kelly's; Morris
Joseph Fisher	Baker, Farmer	Newton St Cyres	1878	White's
Joseph Richards	Baker	Ide	1878	White's
Matilda Creek	Butcher	Combe Martin	1878	White's
Edwin Challacombe	Carpenter	Combe Martin	1878	White's
Thomas Cummings	Carrier	Thorverton	1878	White's
Robert Cudlip	Market Boat Owner	Bere Ferrers	1851	Census
Jane Maben	Dairywoman	Stoke Damerel	1893	Eyre's Plymouth
John Richards	Farm Labourer	Tiverton	1878	White's
John Howe	Shopkeeper	Tiverton	1881	Kelly's
Edwin Lowday	Gardener Domestic	Dartmouth	1878	White's
John Pack	Seedsman	Ipplepen	1878	White's
Charles Dinneford	Grocer	Kenton	1881	Census; QS*
Richard Phillips	Fly Owner	Ivybridge	1897	Census; Kelly's
Elizabeth Powell	Fruiterer	Plymouth	1890	White's
John Dally	Coal Dealer	Starcross	1850	White's
Mrs Ann Scott	Maltster	Exeter St Sidwell	1878	White's

* Quarter Sessions.

Gardeners, leasing or owning land such as John Wotton of Exeter St Thomas who gardened on two acres and Joseph Nicholls, ‘gardener with eight acres’ would almost certainly have also been market gardeners.¹² While it can be assumed that others listed as ‘gardeners’ were actually market gardeners, especially those in rural areas where there were not villas or estates to provide work, these men have not been counted in this chapter unless there is corroborating evidence from elsewhere. Other non-domestic gardeners have also been ignored to avoid them being incorrectly identified as market gardeners rather than nurserymen, private or jobbing gardeners.

The main feature which distinguished market gardening from farming in the South West during the nineteenth century was that garden plots were generally tilled by spade labour alone, not by the plough and, in the majority of cases, by the labour of the gardener and his family only, except at harvest times. Taking advantage of Devon’s mild climate, market gardeners concentrated on growing vegetables, fruit and flowers

for human consumers, rarely for animal feed. Although some crops, notably hemp, flax and hops had been grown for industrial purposes in the eighteenth century most of that was discontinued by the nineteenth.¹³

All gardening activities were labour intensive. Labour was needed for digging, levelling ground, stone picking, constructing raised beds, collecting and spreading manure, sowing seed, thinning, transplanting, hoeing, weeding, putting in stakes for support, watering and deterring pests and diseases. This spread of work indicates that there were jobs, not only for men, but also for women and children. Of the 1,840 market gardeners, identified through census records and directories in Devon during the nineteenth century, 139 were women. Only fourteen boys under the age of 14 were listed as working in market gardens. William French at Ideford and Edwin and William Tall at South Brent were grandsons to the head of household; Frederick Turpin of Plympton St Mary and Frederick Warren were sons, so they could be counted as family members carrying on the business. William Gliddon at Topsham, William Davey of Chudleigh, William Langworthy at Withycombe Raleigh, William Leaman of Ashburton and John Ward at Kenton did not appear to be working for relatives.¹⁴ However, it is probable in such a labour intensive industry that the majority of the children of market gardeners worked with their parents. School log books at Combe Martin report that children were kept at home to harvest strawberries, which suggests the need for their work was seasonal, and this must have been the case elsewhere.¹⁵

In 1822 John Claudius Loudon's simplest definition of market gardeners was those who, 'grow culinary vegetables and also fruits'. He went further in that he split these gardeners into three types; those who grew vegetables, 'for the kitchen' such as cabbage, peas and turnips; those who grew vegetable and herb plants for propagation; and those with 'hot-beds and hot-houses' who produced luxury items such as, 'mushrooms, melons, pines and other forced articles and exotic fruits'. He did not include growing flowers or seeds in his definition, rather he had a further category of gardener, that of florist or market-florist.¹⁶ By 1898 market gardeners were described as 'those engaged in cultivating vegetables, fruits and flowers for market supply'.¹⁷ For the purpose of this chapter therefore, a market gardener will be defined as a gardener with land, rented or owned, who grew vegetables, fruit or flowers for sale at local or distant markets.

Research to Date

Little mention of the south-west market gardening industry had been made until Louisa Jebb undertook her three year study on smallholdings for the Co-operative Small Holdings Association to gather the facts on which to base reforms for settlement of the land.¹⁸ Her work, based in part on oral interviews with smallholders, has a section on market gardening in the Tamar Valley especially at Calstock and St Dominick in Cornwall. Although she mentions Devon smallholdings at Halwill, these were not market gardens, but raised cattle and pigs.¹⁹ Frank Booker, also writing about the Tamar valley, considers the changes to the long-standing market gardening industry brought about by scientific advances, not just of expanded transport systems, but also of new and improved manures which increased the fertility of the soil in the area.²⁰

Ronald Webber produced a general history of the industry in 1972. Although connected with market gardening for many years, he appears to have obtained most of his information from written texts and does not seem to have accessed any census records or local archives. About a quarter of the text (54 pages) is devoted to regional history and of that about four pages to Devon and Cornwall. The book is not referenced, containing only a general bibliography although he repeats much that was written about the area by earlier writers especially Jebb, D. J. Goodchild (1954) and Katherine Johnstone (1955).²¹

According to Webber, apart from the Tamar valley and market gardens around Plymouth and Exeter, there was 'not a great deal of horticulture' in Devon until the 1890s and the beginnings of the violet industry of Torquay, Teignmouth and Dawlish. In fact by the late 1870s there were market gardens in more than 130 parishes throughout the county, the majority of which were centred around Exeter, Torbay and Plymouth or on the north coast. Webber does mention a 'small' undertaking on the Combe Martin slopes that began on the closure of the tin mines and supplied early strawberries to Ilfracombe, a growing holiday resort, and to South Wales.²² Evidence from the 1891 census and directories shows quite a large market gardening industry here in terms of the number of people involved, with thirty-two market gardeners listed for Combe Martin. These included George Rook, James Norman, Susan Eastman, John Watts and John Gubb. There were also eleven gardeners and twenty-seven farmers. By 1901 there were more than sixty families involved in the market garden industry. No

market gardeners were listed for this area in 1851, but this was a parish of small farms; twelve were listed with twenty acres or less.²³

In 1890 land belonging to the Combe Martin Manor Estate was auctioned in ninety-one lots, of which forty-four were already market gardens. Many were very small plots of less than an acre and were advertised as being suitable for either market gardening or for building. Some market gardeners occupied several of these tiny plots. Mr John Burgess, for example, had five holdings, but the total amount of land was less than four acres. Although it is not known whether Burgess purchased any of this land, he did buy three properties in 1905 at a total cost of £597.²⁴ There were several extended families involved in the market garden trade in the village, most notably the Rooks, Burgesses, Normans and Gubbs, as well as individuals.

There have been orchards in Devon since at least the 13th century, growing apples for cider that was not only used as part of a labourer's wages, but was also 'sold in large quantities for the provisioning of ships'.²⁵ Vancouver in 1808 mentioned that, in the 'kitchen gardens', a crop grown by all was that of leeks, but that pot-herbs, kitchen garden vegetables and some ornamental plants and flowers were also grown. Potatoes, he maintained were mostly grown in larger plots, or in the fields.²⁶ There must have been an organised system of supply because when the navy required food for their ships during the Napoleonic War, the demand was that they should be supplied within twelve hours.²⁷

The Torbay area became known for cabbage growing.²⁸ These were grown in vast quantities to supply the market for seed and plants as well as the vegetables themselves, as every gardener whether private, allotment, estate or professional grew cabbages. Paignton was particularly renowned for growing large sweet cabbages which were transported by road to Newton Abbot for distribution to local markets or sent by sea for markets further afield.²⁹ Other important gardening areas in Devon were the sheltered valleys of the north Devon coast, Moretonhampstead where the soil was particularly suited to potato growing, and in and around the Taw valley.³⁰ Market gardens which produced flowers, fruit and vegetables were owned by Torridge Vale Dairy at Torrington; early peas and narcissi were grown at Newton Poppleford and gooseberries at Alphington.³¹

At Branscombe the market gardens were situated on the cliff-top and grew mostly potatoes. There is no mention of these in White's 1850 *Directory*, and no gardeners were listed in the 1841 census. By 1881 there were only five gardeners listed for the village, but ten years later there were twenty-one gardeners in the 1891 census. This suggests that most of the gardens were in production towards the end of the century, although there had probably been small potato fields on the cliffs for many years. In Kelly's *Directory* of 1897, the entry for Branscombe states, 'The crops are wheat, barley, oats and early potatoes, which are grown principally on the slopes of the cliffs facing the sea.'³²

Studies of the market gardening industry in Middlesex, Bedfordshire and Worcestershire have been made by L. G. Bennett, F. Beavington and J. M. Martin respectively from the point of view of social and economic history. They chart the rise of the number of gardeners in response to an expansion in population and consequent demand for food. Each area had early established market gardens. Martin concentrates on the Vale of Evesham and charts the fortunes of a few families, but Bennett and Beavington consider a countywide response.³³

More recently there has been an increased interest in market gardening with the publication of diaries of two market gardeners many miles and years apart.³⁴ These are important because market gardens were often small and family run and few market gardeners left records. Joseph Snell gardened on 18 acres in the Tamar valley, growing vegetables, herbs and fruit. His diary dates from 1914 and runs to 1938 when he was killed in a bus accident aged 56. Although interesting, the diary covers a later period than is being studied. However, it does give a useful insight into gardening techniques which would not have changed significantly, and the number of people who were supported by the market gardening industry. There were barges which brought fertilisers and manure to the quays at Cotehele and Halton. Lime kilns supplied the lime that fertilised the land. The cottage industry of punnet and box making kept workers busy during the winter months as well as providing work for children, unmarried daughters or physically disadvantaged males all year round. Blacksmiths produced and repaired tools, carpenters supplied ladders and there was always a need for casual labour for weeding or harvesting crops.³⁵

Figure 5:2: Crops grown by Joseph Turrill of Garsington

Fruit	Vegetables	Flowers
Apricots	Potatoes	Roses
Apples	Peas	Lillies
Plums	Cabbage	Monthly rose
Blackcurrants	Lettuce	Violets
Raspberries	Kidney beans	Tulips
Gooseberries	Cucumber	Convolvulus
Strawberries	Carrots	Aster
Walnuts	Parsnips	Stock
Grapes	Onions	Winter chrysanthemums
Rhubarb	Shallots	Dwarf chrysanthemums
Damsons	Mangolds	Sweet peas
Cherries	Cauliflower	French marigolds
	Turnips	Crocuses
	Broccoli	Bay trees
	Savoy Cabbage	Gillyflowers
	Celery	Brompton stocks
	Mustard & Cress	Pinks
	Greens	10 week stock
	Marrow	Geraniums
	Flukes (kidney potatoes)	Calceolarias
	Hops (for tops like asparagus)	

Source: E. Dawson and S. Royal (eds.) *An Oxfordshire Market Gardener: The Diary of Joseph Turrill of Garsington 1841-1925* (Stroud, 1993).

A great deal of market gardening was fragmented and made use of whatever land was available. Gardeners such as Joseph Turrill of Garsington had several plots of land, from individual gardens that he leased, to allotments on the common, and even a couple of plots that he purchased from the railway which were ‘very dear’.³⁶ Turrill’s market was the fast growing city of Oxford. His diary, written when he was in his early twenties, details his daily life. He would frequently rise at 4 am or earlier to pack vegetables, fruit or flowers to be transported into the city (see Figure 5:2). During the day he would also help his mother to run a public house and spent many evenings clearing his ground by moonlight. He noted some of the crops he grew and where he acquired some of his plants, made comments on the weather and the prices that his vegetables and fruit fetched at market.³⁷ In his ‘spare’ time he was also the local rate collector and income tax assessor, village photographer and journalist.

At the other end of the scale, the largest and arguably the most successful market gardens were centred around London. Drawing heavily on information from John Middleton’s *View of the Agriculture of Middlesex* (1807), A. C. B. Urwin looks at the

history of market gardens at Brompton, Kensington, Fulham, Hammersmith, Chiswick, Brentford, Isleworth and Twickenham.³⁸ Malcolm Thick has made a study of the Neat House gardens at Westminster, one of the more famous businesses in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century and describes the practices of early market gardeners who were growing mainly for the London markets, although like many, they sold from their premises as well.³⁹ These gardens, like so many of the early ones, were lost under housing in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰

The Covent Garden market was one of the most important centres of distribution of fruit and vegetables in London where most produce was sent from local and distant suppliers. A brief history of the market and of a family of market gardeners has been produced by Jesse Lobjoit Collins, herself a descendent of the Huguenot family who came to London in the 1680s. The Lobjoits leased and owned several farms and gardens within a few miles of the market and became one of the most famous market garden producers with a fixed stand at the market.⁴¹ William Lobjoit was a member of the Committee of the Market Gardeners, Nurserymen and Farmers Association who worked with the Duke of Bedford to organise the market in 1832.⁴²

Land

An advertisement in *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* in 1832 was aimed at 'nurserymen and market gardeners' and gave details of gardens to be let for a period of fourteen years. What is particularly interesting about this advertisement is that the gardens belonged to Dulford House at Broadhembury.⁴³ This suggests that landowners in times of economic hardship, or absenteeism were prepared to let their kitchen gardens to an outside agency. This appears to be not uncommon as the Courtenays at Powderham had let their kitchen garden in 1851 to William Major as a market garden. The garden at Exwick House was also advertised to be let by tender 'for a term of 7 or 10 years' in 1834.⁴⁴ Other large gardens were advertised for sale or let to gardeners or nurserymen such as those of Mount Radford House, praised as 'well-stocked and very productive, and, as seen in Chapter four, that of Lupton.⁴⁵

Letting kitchen gardens could be beneficial to both parties. The landlord, should he require it, still had access to a regular supply of good quality fresh vegetables and fruit with the addition of a regular income. The gardener benefited by leasing land that was

already walled, well stocked and almost certainly in good heart. He also had access to buildings and glasshouses that formed the kitchen garden range. He may have started his business with one assured customer and would also have been sufficiently close to a town, probably with reasonable roads, where a market would absorb his other produce.

Other land was advertised to let when a gardener gave up the ground or on the death of the occupier. For example 'To Let... [a] highly productive market garden containing 17½ acres in a high state of cultivation, with suitable buildings thereon, and for many years past in the occupation of the late Mr George Passmore of Exeter.'⁴⁶ It is rare to find details of rents required or paid. Land for market gardening could fetch higher rents than for normal agricultural ground therefore it was usually let out by tender – this ensured that the landowner achieved the maximum rent possible.⁴⁷

Estate and town records that include leases and deeds indicate where some market gardeners held land, for example, the assignment of a lease to William Francis of Bicton, and mortgages and sale to Edward Keen of Plymouth.⁴⁸ It has been possible to trace the growth of market gardening following the Smallholdings Act of 1892. The Courtenay papers illustrate how land was let in small parcels within six to eight miles of Exeter specifically for market gardening, and Walter Radcliffe at Tamerton Foliot also let land to market gardeners.⁴⁹

Leases and deeds need to be studied carefully because they often detailed land for private use, not commercial purposes. It was common for people to have a garden separate from their home, especially if they were living and working in the centre of the city where land for gardens was scarce.

Early History

There has always been a place for food production to provide for those who had insufficient or no land of their own. These included people living in institutions and those whose main occupation precluded food production such as seamen, craftsmen and industrial workers living in towns. Initially, royalty, religious houses and the aristocracy, who were in possession of large private gardens, sold surplus produce in local markets. Monasteries, for example, grew vegetables for food, herbs for medication and flowers for use in religious ceremonies or for dressing the saints.⁵⁰ Henry VIII was

responsible for introducing a wider variety of fruit and vegetables into this country from Europe.⁵¹ It is said that he had plants and seeds imported at the demand of Catherine of Aragon who missed the selection of vegetables from home.⁵² From the mid sixteenth century London was supplied, in part, with surplus brassicas, root crops and fruit from the gardens and orchards of the gentry from Kent and Essex.⁵³ As London and the larger towns expanded, so too did the demand for supplies of fruit and vegetables and in the early seventeenth century the Gardener's Company attempted to protect its own membership by regulating the size of garden plots and the numbers of employees of Middlesex gardeners. This was unsuccessful and by the middle of the seventeenth century, staple crops were supplied by market gardeners who had set up their businesses within easy reach of London and other urban markets.⁵⁴ Traditional areas associated with early market gardening were London, Bristol and Norwich, the three largest towns in England, plus Exeter and Plymouth in the south-west. Not only were sea ports centres of demand in their own right, but they also needed fresh fruit and vegetables, high in vitamin C, to carry on board ship to help prevent scurvy.

New fashions in herb, vegetable and fruit eating were introduced when Protestant refugees from Holland and France fled to this country as a result of religious persecution. Many, like the Lobjoit family, brought with them their gardening skills and set up as market gardeners in various regions of England, most notably around London, Sandwich in Kent, Colchester and East Anglia where the immigrant population congregated.⁵⁵

There were problems of transportation, however. Most goods would have been moved by pack horse, cart or boat, therefore the majority of markets were limited to nearby towns to ensure crops remained fresh and in good condition. Women in Middlesex walked into London carrying baskets of produce weighing up to 40 pounds on their heads.⁵⁶ Turnpike Trusts in the early eighteenth century improved roads which were often widened and straightened, and certainly better maintained; this helped shorten journey times.⁵⁷ By 1836 there were 22,000 miles of turnpike roads in England which was approximately twenty per cent of all roads.⁵⁸ Turnpike tolls added to the cost of transporting produce. The charge for a single horse was 1d, for a wagon with one horse 3d, a wagon with 2 horses 6d and upwards.⁵⁹ There were also charges for standing in the markets and for accommodating a horse. Overall costs for marketing varied according to how produce was transported and whether wages were included. However, produce

could be also be transported on rivers and canals. It was no accident that many market gardens were near navigable rivers or situated along the coast, like those in Devon. Root vegetables, hard cabbage and some fruit stood longer journeys, but it was not until the advent of the railways in the nineteenth century that more delicate produce could be transported quickly over long distances.

Joan Thirsk suggests that the development of market gardening was part of an alternative approach to agriculture during periods of agricultural depression. She maintains that the early growth of horticulture from the second half of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the sixteenth century was influenced by the wealthy and their demand for more exotic fruit and vegetables. When travelling in Europe, people tasted new vegetables and brought or sent back seeds and plants to grow in this country. The introduction of different vegetables and fruit helped stimulate the development of horticultural crops which included new varieties of lettuce, cucumbers, asparagus and artichokes.⁶⁰ These influences encouraged the spread, during the mid-seventeenth century, of market gardening to other regions which included the Vale of Evesham and Vale of Taunton Deane where the soil was particularly suited to growing fruit.

The market gardening industry expanded after the Civil War for several reasons. These included a growing awareness and interest in healthy eating by the wealthier members of the population. For the gardener, increased productivity per acre due to the use of marl, lime and new manures led to larger profits at the market. Landlords also benefited by charging higher rents on gardening ground. New horticultural crops such as cauliflowers from Cyprus and Italy, cabbage from Holland, and Spanish lettuce were very labour intensive to cultivate, but gave work to an expanding population and provided both food and work for the poor. The gentry began to see how intensive gardening methods using spade labour could cut the need for poor relief and so encouraged the growth of labour intensive crops. They were influenced by the growing number of books, more freely available due to new printing practices, which disseminated information about the newest varieties of crops and the latest techniques. These included Walter Bligh's *The English Improver, or a New Survey of Husbandry* (1649), and, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, George London and Henry Wise, notable nurserymen from London, promoted the kitchen garden in *The Retir'd Gard'ner*.⁶¹ This growing fashion for gentlemen to take an interest in their kitchen

gardens and plantations spurred a demand for seeds, plants and trees from the mid seventeenth century.

Gardeners became more sophisticated in their practices with increased use of hot-beds, cloches, bell jars and frames, covered in matting during the winter. These helped extend the growing season, providing early and late crops, thereby satisfying demand for out of season fruit, flowers and vegetables.⁶² Competition between all types of gardeners was fierce which was good for the industry. Knowledge and experience were spread throughout the gardening community as gardeners followed the best practices, and nurtured and bred the best plant varieties.⁶³ Horticultural shows were venues for showing off the latest developments, attended by nurserymen, estate and market gardeners. James Townsend of St David's Hill was one of the exhibitors at Exeter's Botanical and Horticultural Society in 1833.⁶⁴ Other market gardeners exhibiting at shows included George Hockaday, Charles Towil, William Blackmore and William Cornelius at Dawlish. In 1884 Francis Cornelius and John Stone won ten and fourteen prizes respectively, at the Dawlish Flower Show, for their produce.⁶⁵ Competing too, alongside other growers at the market, were some local estate gardeners such as those at Maristow and Powderham (see Chapter Four).⁶⁶

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries farming improvements, rationalisation of land holdings and enclosure forced labourers off the land and into towns which also became magnets for service industries. Many small town holdings, gardens and allotments were sold for building land to accommodate the expanding population. Streets of back to back houses proliferated in town centres where houses were often built so close together that there was little space left available for food production. Town gardeners who lost their holdings were forced to move to the outskirts of towns, but they had a ready market to offset the additional cost of carriage, and the railways expanded markets still further. The South Devon Railway was extended from Exeter in 1846 and eventually reached Plymouth in 1849. By the 1890s there was a branch line to take in the Bere Peninsular which helped the market garden industry at Bere Ferrers and Bere Alston.⁶⁷

In Devon the tourist industry not only brought many visitors to the county who needed to be fed, but it also led to the building of many villas in the more popular seaside towns to house a permanent summer population. Torquay had expanded the most, by 164.3 per

cent from 1801 to 1841, but Teignmouth, Dawlish, and Exmouth also doubled their populations, so it was no wonder that by 1850 White was describing the South Hams as the 'garden of Devonshire'.⁶⁸

Recession in the 1870s and the importation of cheap foreign grain also aided the expansion of horticulture. Farmers turned from growing grain to specialise in growing seeds for seed companies, or to production of potatoes, carrots, cabbages, peas, beans and brussels sprouts which could be sold as cash crops.⁶⁹ The downside of this trade was the cost of transportation, although without the railways, this diversification would not have been possible. Without the gangs of women from Shropshire and Ireland who travelled across the country to help with weeding and the fruit harvest, there would also have been a shortage of labour to pick the crops.

Areas which benefited were the Vale of Evesham, Worthing, Sandy in Bedfordshire, Spalding, the Isle of Axholme and Wisbech in Cambridgeshire. The latter was formerly a wheat growing area, but by 1900 was sending 15,000 tons of fruit via the railway to major cities. Cambridgeshire became a jam-making area with two to three hundred jam-makers, such as Chivers of Histon near Cambridge. The largest of these used 20,000 tons of fruit annually mostly supplied by smallholders.⁷⁰ In Plymouth, by 1902, the Devonshire Fruit Preserving Company competed with H. Matthews & Son, Fruit Preservers.⁷¹ Increased affluence meant that even the poor could afford to buy jam.

The significant decline in the rural population led to a nostalgic view of country living that was part of a burgeoning interest in health and fitness. The vegetarian society was founded at Ramsgate in Kent in 1847. One of the presidents was Mr Joseph Brotherton, Member of Parliament for Salford, whose wife had written the first cookery book using only vegetarian recipes. Other societies followed including a Dietetic Reform Society in 1875, and the London Food Reform Society in 1877. These groups were linked with religion through the Bible Christians and with campaigns against tobacco and alcohol.⁷² By the 1880s vegetarianism had a high profile and encouraged a demand for top quality vegetables. The middle classes had changed their diet to include more salads and fruit for dessert. Tomatoes, lettuce and cucumber were the most popular salad crops grown under glass.⁷³ Potatoes were a crop that many grew for themselves or they were grown in fields, so market gardeners, especially smaller producers, concentrated on production of the earliest or novelty varieties such as blue potatoes.

From the 1840s, allotments had been made available to labourers and artisans throughout Devon, but apart from at Buckfastleigh, rules forbade the growing of vegetables for sale.⁷⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century, legislation was introduced which forced local authorities to provide allotments if there was sufficient demand. Some of those who applied for land in Ashwater, Bradford and Thornbury requested larger plots of two to four acres (the usual size for an allotment was a maximum of ¼ acre) which might be better considered smallholdings.⁷⁵ As the 'back to the land' movement took a hold, it was thought that small tradesmen could combine their trade with working a smallholding, or that it was possible to keep people on the land in a self-supporting capacity acting as market gardeners selling vegetables, flowers, soft fruit, poultry and eggs.⁷⁶ The 1892 Small Holdings Act allowed county councils to borrow monies from the Public Works Loan Commission for the purchase of land for smallholdings. These holdings were approximately four acres and were a reasonable size for those wishing to set up as market gardeners. To qualify, an agricultural worker had to be able to pay twenty per cent of the cost initially and reimburse the remainder over a period of time in instalments.⁷⁷ Where land was sold for this purpose there were often stringent conditions attached. This is demonstrated by the sale in 1895 of a little over four acres of land by the Duke of Bedford's estate, where the purchaser 'Mr Mallett a little Tradesman at Tavistock', was to erect and maintain a 'substantial stone faced fence... to be approved by the Duke's Steward'. The sale excluded any rights of common and forbade taking water from the mill leat.⁷⁸

Water was an important factor for market gardeners. Those plots with access to water fetched a better price as it was time consuming to have to carry water from elsewhere. When tenders were asked for lease of land this was one of the items used as a selling point to prospective tenants.⁷⁹

The Victorian era saw a growth in interest in flowers, especially roses, daffodils, violets and anemones which led to some market gardeners, where the soil and climate were suitable, specialising in flower crops. Bulb growers in Spalding produced narcissi, lilies and crocuses for the middle classes in the industrial towns of the north of England.⁸⁰ In Devon, Teignmouth, Holcombe and Dawlish were well-known for their violet crops in the 1890s.⁸¹ The income from these flowers was as high as £1,300 per annum on as little as three acres of land making it a very attractive crop.⁸²

Nineteenth century society was wealthier overall than in previous generations making more money available for purchase of plants, vegetables, and soft fruit out of season. This, together with better transport networks led to a growth in demand for small-holdings and a surge in the market gardening industry. This was reflected in the acreage of land utilised as market gardens which in Britain increased from 37,273 acres in 1878 to 83,081 acres in 1892, and this excluded cabbages, carrots, broccoli, kidney beans and peas grown as field crops.⁸³

Size of Holdings

Unlike the huge market gardens around London the majority of market gardeners in the south-west operated on small parcels of land which rarely exceeded fifty acres. For example, the 'productive market garden' at Pinhoe, Exeter, occupied by Mr Dyke, advertised for sale by Messrs Hussey and Son in July 1876 comprised only two and a half acres.⁸⁴ Acreages varied from the half acre gardened by John Western at Tormoham in 1881 to 42 acres in the care of John Sercombe at Exeter Holy Trinity in 1851. Even in the early twentieth century some holdings remained small (see Figure 5:3). The average from eighty one records found was 9.2 acres. This takes into account the larger acreages of nine farmers who combined farming with market gardening.⁸⁵ If these are taken out of the equation then the average holding drops to 5.4 acres. Sixty three per cent had holdings of five acres or less, seventy five per cent of holdings were ten acres or less. Goodchild estimates that market gardens in the Tamar valley in the 1950s only averaged three to four acres apiece.⁸⁶ These figures are similar to those found by Martin for Evesham, but smaller than those found by Beavington for Sandy and Potton in Bedfordshire which averaged 8½ and 12 acres respectively.⁸⁷

The more prosperous gardeners of the Vale of Evesham have been shown to be gardeners of long standing in the region. Martin traced gardening families back to the early eighteenth century using parish and probate records, while Beavington found the gardening industry in Sandy went back even further to the seventeenth century.⁸⁸ Beavington used wills, lists of jurors and census material for his evidence. Wills and inventories are not common in Devon as many were destroyed during the second world war, and so far none have been found to help date the emergence of market gardening in the region. However, from studying census records for the area it would appear that there were long established gardening families such as the Pynes in Topsham, the

Bowdens and Sercombes in Exeter. James Beer, a market gardener and fruit dealer in Bishops Tawton left property and land in his will to his sons and two of his daughters.⁸⁹ William, the youngest son, another market gardener rented two orchards from the Chichester Estate in addition to the garden and orchard from his legacy.⁹⁰ His brother James was a fruit dealer who also employed his brother-in-law Sidney Newcombe as an assistant.⁹¹

Figure 5:3. Devon market garden acreage

Acres	½- 1	1¼ -2	2¼ -3	3¼ -4	4- 5	6- 10	11- 15	16- 20	21- 25	26- 40	41- 50	51- 60	61- 80	81- 100	160
1803						1									
1826- 1850	2	1	1			1					1				
1851	1	4	1	5	4	4	2		1						
1852- 1880	1	1	2		2	6	2	3	2	2		1			1
1881- 1891	1	3	6	4	4	5	1	4			1		1	1	
1900- 1908		3	2	2											
Total	5	12	12	11	10	17	5	7	3	2	2	1	1	1	1

Source: *1881 Census* [CD]: *1851 Census* [CD]: Devon Record Office (DRO) 1508M/Devon Add LL 6/8: DRO 1508M/LL1/27-30b: DRO 52/7/13/5: EFP 19.07.1876 1c.

In nineteenth century Devon, 188 market gardeners came from out of county. The largest number, thirty-four per cent, were from Cornwall of which a quarter came from market gardening parishes in the Tamar valley. Eighty-one per cent of these gardened in or very near to Plymouth. Thirty-five gardeners came from Somerset, all from different parishes. The majority of these individuals lived in or near Exeter, with three at Plymouth and three in North Devon. Nine gardeners from Dorset lived in the east of the county, the other five were at Plymouth. Only three gardeners came from Scotland which is curious, because many gardeners in England were Scottish. Two of the eight gardeners from Wales were at Combe Martin and had probably travelled across the Bristol Channel as did some of the fruit grown in that parish.⁹²

Those gardeners who were not from the south-western region may have travelled to this part of the world as private gardeners and then purchased or leased a piece of land on which to garden. Some gardeners travelled to several places in their lifetime. Thomas Gilson was from Essex, his wife from Suffolk and his son was born in Torquay. In 1881 the family lived in Dawlish.⁹³ James Spindler, also from Essex had a wife born in

Stafford and children born in Birmingham. Gilson and Spindler may have travelled looking for work or may have had gardening links to friends and family. William Hockey, from Cheshire, came to Devon via the navy and remained as a market gardener in Kingskerswell.⁹⁴ South-west gardeners tended to move around also, but within a much smaller locality, and often nearer to a town or railway halt and therefore closer to a market.

Occupancy of Land

Figure 5:4. Market gardeners renting land from the Earl of Devon

Name	Address			From	Term	A	R	P	Rent
Drew	James	Swiss Cottage	Alphington	29.9.1907	7 years	1	3	33	£15
Evans	William		Kenton	1.3.1907	6 mons.	1	1	16	£6.10s
Evans	Thomas	4 Torr Place	Kenton	25.12.1919					
Evans	William		Kenton	29.9.1912	12 mons.	1	1	28	£7
Gribble	Henry	Cains Hill	Kenton	1.3.1907	6 mons.	1	1	10	£6.10s
Gribble	Henry		Kenton	29.9.1907	6 mons.		2	11	£3
Gribble	William	Torrington Place	Kenton	25.3.1916		1	1	28	£4
	Henry								
Gribble	William	Torrington Place	Kenton	29.9.1912		1	0	9	£5
	Henry								
Gribble	William	Torrington Place	Kenton			1	0	12	£1.10s
	Henry								
Leach	John	Marsh Farm	Kenton	28.9.1906	7 years	1	2	22	£8
Morrish	William	East Town	Kenton	1.3.1907	6 mons.	1	1	9	£6.5s
Sanders	George E	Torrington Place	Kenton	29.9.1908	12 mons.	1	3	0	£13.15s
Sanders	George E	Torrington Place	Kenton	29.9.1908	12 mons.	1	0	9	
Taylor	Elizabeth, Mrs	South Town	Kenton	September 1908	12 mons.	3	3	23	£30
Taylor	Henry	South Town	Kenton	5.3.1928	12 mons.	3	3	23	
	John								
West	George		Kenton	29.9.1908					£5
Westcott	George	Southbrook	Kenton	29.9.1882	14 years	5	0	10	£28
	Henry								
	Palmer								

Source DRO 1508M/Devon Add LL 6/8; 1508M/LL1/27-30b.

The majority of market gardeners were tenants which made for an insecure occupancy, unless long leases could be arranged. If gardeners had short leases, then they would be more likely to move regularly. Tenancy agreements varied. Some were renewable every six months, others annually like that of Mrs Sercombe who was on a yearly Christmas tenancy.⁹⁵ George Westcott’s lease was for fourteen years. Although this was

exceptional for those who leased land from the Earl of Devon, he did have a larger plot than others in the area (see Figure 5:4). Yet market gardeners did hold the same land for much longer than this. John Squire of Broadclyst had held his land for ‘upwards of 20 years’ in 1876 when he was required to make a declaration regarding ownership of land in the parish.⁹⁶ The Gilsons, Mitchells and Northcotts were running their market gardening businesses from the same land in 1881 that they had held in 1851, although it is not known whether this was by lease or whether they owned the land.⁹⁷ In 1866 John Sandford of Little Torrington had the option of renting his land from the ‘Mayor Aldermen and Burgesses of Great Torrington’ for a period of ‘7, 11, or 14 years’. This meant that after an initial three year period, notice could be given on either side. He obviously kept the land at Griffiths Hill for two periods of 14 years because it was leased out again in 1893, this time to a Mr James Quick.⁹⁸ Caird suggested that from a management point of view, seven to ten years was the minimum length of time needed to guarantee good maintenance and improvement of the land. Any less than this and the tenant would not be prepared to risk investing his money which he might lose at any time.⁹⁹

Figure 5:5. Table of tolls for produce shipped within the Manor of Kenton (1894)

	Per	£ s d
Ale, Beer, Porter, Cyder	hogshead	6d
Ale, Beer, Porter, Cyder	barrel	3d
Apples	Ton	1s 0d
Beans	Quarter	4d
Bones and bone dust	Ton	1s 0d
Flax	Ton	1s 6d
Groceries	Cwt	4d
Hops	Packet	6d
Potatoes	Cwt	1d
Seeds	Quarter	6d
Turnips	ton	4d

Source: DRO 1508M/Devon add M1/6.

Landlords such as the Courtenays at Powderham, encouraged the market gardening industry by letting land specifically for that purpose, although it can be argued that this was simply an extension of letting allotments which they had been doing since the 1840s. They charged higher rents for market gardens than for agricultural land. There was also a toll imposed for shipped ‘goods or merchandise’ via the sea at Starcross (see Figure 5:5 above).¹⁰⁰

The agreement between the Earl of Devon and Westcott dated 1882 states that the gardens at Kenton should be 'properly cropped and filled up with fruit and apple trees according to the best system of Market Gardening and the custom of the neighbourhood'. When taking over the land on the demise of their father in 1893, two of his younger sons, William and Frederick Westcott also agreed to the same terms 'for the residue of the said term'.¹⁰¹ Another gardener James Drew agreed with the Earl of Devon to take on a plot of land at Alphington, which was little more than an acre and a half, for seven years at an annual rent of £15, the 'first year free in consideration of laying out the same as market garden'.¹⁰² In common with allotment tenancies, when land needed to be cleared or laid out it was often let at a reduced rent, or free for a specified period, the assumption being that little or no income would be made in the first year.

Invested capital was lost if a gardener was forced to move on. As a result gardeners chose their crops with this risk in mind. Soft fruit gave a quicker return than tree fruit. Most vegetables cropped in one year. In the Vale of Evesham, tenants who gave up a holding would find another man willing to give him the cost of improvements, including fruit bushes and trees and other growing crops. The landlord had overall approval, but transactions were between the outgoing and incoming tenant. This made for stability and fairness, and protected growers from loss when moving out or landlords having to pay compensation to outgoing tenants.¹⁰³ A similar system worked in Cornwall and Devon. In Topsham an advertisement for a two acre plot in Monmouth Street specified that the incoming tenant would have to pay the late occupier for garden stock and fruit trees at valuation.¹⁰⁴ Compensation for crops could be expensive to the incoming tenant. A gardener in Calstock paid £75 for the cost of fruit-trees planted on a holding of 8½ acres, but this was cheaper than having to clear the land first, which could have cost as much as £20 per acre.¹⁰⁵ Apple trees cost approximately 2s each, but there would have been a wait before they matured and produced a viable crop.¹⁰⁶

The Market Gardeners' Compensation Act (1895) gave tenants of holdings let as market gardens, the right to claim compensation at the end of their tenancy for fruit trees and bushes and for permanent vegetable crops such as asparagus. Landlords were not always happy at this, often stipulating that no part of a farm be called a market garden (hence one of the problems in separating gardeners and farmers in the census returns). They sometimes forbade growth of market garden crops, or alternatively provided fruit

bushes and trees themselves.¹⁰⁷ The estate at Maristow paid out regularly for the purchase and planting of apple trees for their tenants, for example in 1855 they purchased fifty apple trees for Bower Farm and garden, newly incorporated onto the estate.¹⁰⁸ Another way round the Act was to specify in the tenancy agreement that the 'Market Gardeners' Compensation Act of 1895 shall not apply to the tenancy hereby created'.¹⁰⁹ It was not until the Agricultural Holdings Acts of 1906, 1910 and 1914, that the tenant had a right to choose how to farm despite covenants on his lease.¹¹⁰ This gave more freedom to the growers and increased the variety of crops grown.

Rent

The cost of renting land bore little relationship to the size of the plot or the length of the tenancy. Instead it had more to do with the quality of the soil, the position of the garden and the general state of cultivation. Land that was near to a market, well cultivated and well stocked fetched a much higher rent than poorly tended land. Landowners charged a higher rent for small plots of garden ground than for land let for agricultural purposes. As a result there was no shortage of owners advertising land in the *Exeter Flying Post* for plots in and around Exeter.¹¹¹

Demand from alternative uses could influence rents, therefore land in town commanded a higher rent than in rural areas as there was competition for land for residential purposes. A plot near to a town with easy access to a market, railway or carrier system also generated high rents. In 1876 Mr Dyke paid £16 a year for 2½ acres near the church in Pinhoe, and Westcott was paying £28 for his five acres in Kenton, £6.8s and £5.12s per acre respectively.¹¹² This is in comparison with the cost of agricultural land near Exeter which was between £1.10s and £2.10s per acre.¹¹³

If there were buildings included in the lease then the rent would also be higher than for a vacant plot. Greenhouses and hot-houses were essential in propagating early plants and other buildings were needed for packing and storage. Many gardeners also lived on site. Martin claims that the rental value of garden ground in the Vale of Evesham was as much as £5 to £10 per acre.¹¹⁴ Evidence from Courtenay rentals suggests an average price of £5.16s per acre, with the highest rent £8 per acre and the lowest at £2.10s.¹¹⁵ If other land is included this increases to £6.2s per acre (see Figure 5:6). Rents were not increased throughout the term of the tenancy, so stayed stable over at least thirty years.

All this land was near to Exeter and of high fertility. Jebb found similar figures for Cornwall, she stated that rents paid were from £2 to £5 per acre with ‘as much as £7 and £8 an acre...paid in good situations’.¹¹⁶

Market garden land for purchase was expensive. From 1883 to 1898 in Middlesex land for sale was priced at between £80 and £600 an acre.¹¹⁷ At Combe Martin in 1890 productive market garden land fetched almost £400 an acre.¹¹⁸

Figure 5:6. Rents for market gardens in Devon

Date	Name	Place	Holding	Rent pa.	Rent per acre	Term
1876	Mr Dyke	Pinhoe, Exeter	Market Garden	£16	£6.8s	N/k
1876	Mr Taylor	Pinhoe, Exeter	Orchard	£7	£4.13s	N/k
1882	George Westcott	Southbrook, Kenton	Cottage, stable, shed and 5 acres	£28	£5.12s	14 years
1890	Langdons, Bastin & Bishop	South Wonford, Heavitree	1 cottage each and shared market garden of 1 acre	£37.10s + taxes		N/k
1890	Henry Taylor	Kenton	3¾ acres	£30	£8	Annual
1907	James Drew	Alphington	2 acres	£15	£7.10s	7 years
1908	George Sanders	Kenton	Several small plots, total 3½ acres	£15.10s	£4.8s.6d	Annual with six months notice

Source: *EFP* 19.07.1876, 1c; DRO 1508M/LL1/28; DRO 53/6 Box 103/10.

Crops

Some produce was grown for industry. Rape was grown for oil, madder and saffron as dye plants.¹¹⁹ The latter was also used as a herb and a remedy against smallpox. This was a labour intensive crop; three-quarters of the cost of production went on labour, so production was sometimes used in lieu of poor relief to provide work for poor labourers.¹²⁰ Market gardens near towns such as Bere Regis in Dorset grew liquorice so that they could take advantage of the street sweepings as manure.¹²¹ Flax was grown in Devon, at Crewkerne, Whimble, Silverton, Willand, Cullompton, Kentisbeare, Uffculme, Halberton and Church Stanton in the eighteenth century for the linen industry. Hemp was produced for rope and net making at Dawlish on the south coast and at Combe Martin in North Devon, and many other coastal towns where rope was needed for shipping.¹²²

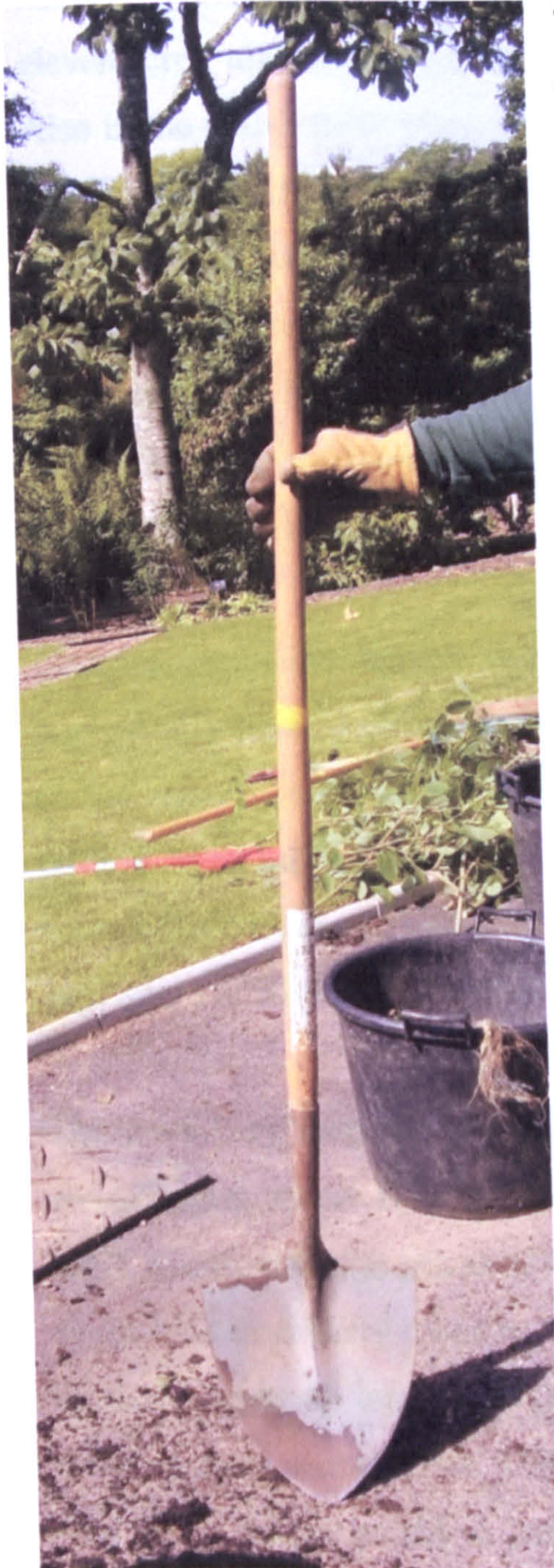
Cornwall was considered to be one of the best districts for vegetable production in the 1870s.¹²³ The combination of fertile soil and a mild climate suited the production of early fruit and vegetables. Marketing was helped by the use of the Great Western Railway which in 1899 allowed up to 8,000 tons of broccoli, 4,500 tons of new potatoes and 300 tons of strawberries to be exported from the region.¹²⁴ By 1907 there were 430 acres under strawberry production in Devon and 650 acres in Cornwall. 'Sir Joseph Paxton' was a mid season variety introduced in 1862, raised by S. Bradley at Elton Manor in Nottingham and by the 1870s Laxton's 'Royal Sovereign' were being grown, being an all round crop suitable for dessert, for canning and jam-making.¹²⁵ Early potatoes were first grown as a commercial market garden crop supplying the local area and had been sent by sea to London, Plymouth and Portsmouth. The broccoli trade started in the late 1830s, firstly selling to Bristol, then to London. Other successful Cornish crops included seakale, asparagus from Padstow and Ludgvan and, from the glasshouses in the Penzance region, cucumbers, peaches, grapes and tomatoes.¹²⁶

Much of the fruit supplied from Devon and Cornwall came from the Tamar valley which divides the two counties. This is an eight to ten mile stretch of land running from Saltash up to Launceston on the Cornish side and the Bere Ferrers peninsula running down to Tamerton Foliot on the Devon side; the growing areas are situated on the northern banks of streams running into the Tamar. There south facing slopes are as steep as 34 degrees with gradients of 1 in 1 and 1 in 2, but the steepness of the valley provides shelter from the prevailing south-west wind. Originally carpeted with oak woodland the soil was light and fertile, and varied from six inches at the top of the slopes to about two feet at the bottom. When the build-up of the soil at the bottom became too great, it was barrowed back to the top of the holding or winched up the hill with the help of a horse-driven pulley system. Later, ploughing was done using a similar pulley system with ploughs attached to wires. Although the ground dried out quickly in times of drought, this was offset by a high average rainfall of nearly fifty inches a year, a comparatively dry spring and temperatures of 70 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer.

With such a shallow soil, one of the problems was the need to keep the humus level high. Leaf mould from the bed of the Tamar was used as a mulch, as was 'dock dung', a mixture of street sweepings, fish waste, butcher's offal and night soil collected from Pottery Quay in Plymouth and brought up in barges for just the cost of the transport

which cost the gardener £3.¹²⁷ The smell must have been extremely unpleasant, but the richness of the manure ensured the strawberry beds stayed fertile for many years and ensured good crops. The St Dominick region alone produced between 200 and 300 tons of strawberries a year.¹²⁸

Figure 5:7. Cornish shovel



Tools used to counter difficult conditions included the Tamar valley dibber which was developed to make vertical holes on steeply sloping ground. The Cornish shovel (see Figure 5.7), a long handled spade which ensured large amounts of material could be moved with less energy than a short handled tool was also used, as was a special turning fork and a sclum, which was a manure drag.¹²⁹

The parishes of Stoke Climsland, Calstock, St Dominic and Landulph in Cornwall; Bere Alston, Bere Ferrers and Tamerton Foliot in Devon had a long tradition of supplying fruit and vegetables to the navy at Plymouth. Bere Ferrers was noted in *White's Directory* in 1850 as 'producing vast quantities of apples, cherries, strawberries, gooseberries, currants and the finest cider'.¹³⁰ The small sweet black mazzard cherries were pickled in brandy to make a liqueur.¹³¹ Mazzards were also grown in many north Devon parishes, most notably at Atherington, Goodleigh, Landkey, Bishop's Tawton, Chittlehampton, Swimbridge and Tawstock.¹³² Strawberries were grown for local markets and for external sale from the 1860s. Other

crops from the Bere Ferrers area included gooseberries, raspberries and rhubarb. Raspberries and currants were grown on the richer soil lower in the valleys. The raspberry crop averaged two tons to the acre and was worth £22 a ton. Annually, 75 to 100 tons were despatched to market, worth to the grower £1,500 to £2,000 in 1907.¹³³ Flower crops included the double-white narcissus first sent by Mr Jackson of Bere

Alston to London in the 1880s, and which partially superseded the fruit crop on the Devon side of the Tamar.¹³⁴

At Tamerton Foliot the census of 1851 records two nurserymen and a nurseryman's apprentice, twelve gardeners of which two were almost certainly domestic, two garden labourers and two garden apprentices as well as Joanna Pearse and Mary Pote who were listed as 'gardeners'. By 1881 there were 16 non domestic gardeners including one with eleven acres, nine domestic gardeners, six market gardeners and seven garden labourers. Also in the parish there were two market women, a manure agent and Bessie Pengelly, who combined the occupations of dressmaker and carter. There were also several small farmers.¹³⁵ Directories of 1866 and 1878 listed two further nurserymen and four other market gardeners who did not appear in either census, and by 1897 fourteen market gardeners were listed including the Gregory, Ellis, Finnimore and Packer families.¹³⁶ These figures demonstrate the increase in the market gardening industry in this area as the century progressed.

Cherries and cider apples were first grown in the valley, not in neat rows, but haphazardly planted in untidy orchards.¹³⁷ The cherry crop had always been important to the region. In the 1850s fruit transported to Plymouth, London and the Midlands fetched from between 2d and 5d per pound. Produce was sent by market-boats from Morwellham Quay or Halton Quay. R. T. Paige estimated that one barge could carry the equivalent of fifty carts each with a carter or 500 pack-horses with many drovers.¹³⁸

The strawberry crop was the second most important crop until James Walter Lowry, a young tenant farmer from St Dominic visited the International Exhibition in London in 1862. Seeing the high prices of strawberries for sale, he realised it would be worthwhile to send his strawberry crops to the city via the railway. Once started in business himself, he then bought up local produce for re-sale, encouraging local growers to expand into growing more strawberries. This led to better prices for local gardeners as the fruit was sold for 2s 6d per pound in London and the Midlands.¹³⁹ By 1881 Lowry, a Wesleyan preacher, farmed 80 acres with help from five labourers, two boys and six women.¹⁴⁰ In 1889, 300 tons of strawberries were carried from the region by the Great Western Railway.¹⁴¹ An alternative market was to provide the local areas such as Calstock with strawberries for strawberry teas supplied to day trippers.¹⁴²

Figure 5:8. St Dominick gardeners and punnet makers 1881

Forename	Last Name	Relate	M*	Age	Occupation
Mary	Bennett	Dau	U	14	Punnet Maker
Mary Jane	Bennett	Dau'L	M	35	Market Gardener
Stephen	Bennett	Son	M	42	Market Gardener
Mary	Bennett	Head	W	77	Market Gardener
Rosa	Cradick	Dau	U	16	Punnet Maker
Elizabeth A	Doney	Dau	U	14	Punnet Maker
John	Harris	Serv	U	29	Gardener Domestic Servant
John	Herring	Son	U	14	Gardener (ND)
Elizabeth	Herring	Dau	U	16	Punnet Maker
Eliza	Herring	Dau	U	18	Punnet Maker
Ann	Hill	Niece	U	16	Punnet Maker
Mary	Hill	Head	U	48	Punnet Maker
John	Hoskin	Son	U	17	Assistant Gardener (ND)
Bessie	Hughes	Dau	U	11	Punnet Maker
Harriet	Hughes	Dau	U	14	Punnet Maker
George	Jope	Head	M	40	Fruit Grower & Market Gardener
Samuel	Knight	Head	M	65	Market Gardener
Elizabeth	Martin	Dau	U	15	Punnet Maker
Mary Jane	Martin	Dau	U	29	Punnet Maker
Bessie	Reep	Dau	U	13	Punnet Maker
William	Sargent	Son	U	13	Punnet Maker (Basket)
Charlotte	Sargent	Dau	U	21	Punnet Maker
Mary Elizth.	Sleeman	Dau	U	24	Punnet Maker
Emma	Smale	Dau	U	14	Punnet Maker
Benjamin	Snell	Head	M	36	Fruit Grower & Market Gardener
Selina	Striplin	Dau	U	19	Gardener Assistant (7/3)
Nicholas	Striplin	Son	U	22	Punnet Maker
William Baker	Striplin	Head	M	62	Market Gardener
Bessie	Trenance	Dau	U	17	Punnet Maker
Francis	Vosper	Head	M	29	Gardener (ND)
William S	Vosper	Head	M	57	Butcher and Market Gardener
Daniel	Vosper	Head	M	67	Gardener (ND) 5 1/2 acres emp. 1 man
Bessie	Wadge	Dau	U	13	(Punnet Maker (Basket)

*Marital status U: Unmarried; M: Married; W: Widow.

Source: 1881 Census St Dominick Parish on CD.

The strawberry season began at the end of May with the fruit being picked, mostly by women paid 1s 3d a day, and packed into circular punnets which held between half and three quarters of a pound of fruit each. These were packed, 54 at a time, into wooden boxes, the fruit being protected with ferns. Protection was so important that one man or boy was delegated to cut the ferns and lay them out ready for packing.¹⁴³

The punnets were described in the 1881 census returns as a 'small pot for strawberries (willow)'.¹⁴⁴ Punnnet making provided work as a cottage industry for which women and children were paid 10d to 1s a gross. At St Dominick in 1881, seventeen females and two males were listed as punnet makers. The youngest was 11 and the oldest was 48. All were unmarried. Together with known market gardeners and other gardeners, the industry involved at least 24 families in a small area where there were only 830 people listed on the census return (see Figure 5:8).¹⁴⁵

The Hutchings family, Emma senior, her daughters Emma and Mary were punnet makers at Bere Ferrers in 1891, and Emma junior in 1901, whereas the Richards family were all involved in basket making. John and son Thomas were basket makers and John's unmarried daughters, Mary, 46 and Elizabeth, 44 were 'dealers in baskets'.¹⁴⁶

Improved communication routes opened up new markets for growers. Strawberries, narcissi and cherries were exported from outlying areas such as the Tamar valley to large cities, in particular to London, Bristol and Manchester. Despite the cost of carriage some market gardeners grew rich as a result. This enabled them to rent larger plots or even to purchase their own land. Jebb quotes several instances of men who had improved their position in life as a direct result of market gardening. This had been happening from the 1860s. Samuel Crump of Alphington, George Gale at Salcombe Regis and William Greenslade at Broadclyst were all agricultural labourers who took on market gardens during this period, enhancing their social status.¹⁴⁷ Duncan Mitchell suggests this was possible due to improving wages and available small-holdings for rental.¹⁴⁸ It was also led by a demand for vegetables to supply growing urban markets.

One of Jebb's examples included a labourer's son who by 1907 occupied a farm of 150 acres, a labourer who was able to purchase five acres of land for £100 and the son of another labourer, then owning land worth £20,000. Significantly, 'out of 423 holdings of over five acres, 107 [were] occupied by men who [were] labourers, or the sons of labourers'.¹⁴⁹ Many miners had reclaimed wasteland and worked small plots of land for their own use and as mining failed they began to work their land more intensively. This is borne out by the census returns for the Tamar valley, but was also a factor at Combe Martin where John Blackmore, for example, changed his profession from lead miner to market gardener.¹⁵⁰ In Calstock at least six labourers (James Langsford, John Lang,

Francis Luscombe, Nathaniel Sandercock, Thomas Rickard and William Warwick), together with six tin and copper miners (John Davey, John Richards, Thomas Statton, James Fitze, Joseph Start and Start Treby), became gardeners as did one cordwainer (Thomas Baker), and Nicholas Clark, a former broom-maker.¹⁵¹

Most of the holdings in the Tamar valley were family concerns; it was rare to use outside labour. John Toll at Bere Ferrers had help from his wife and two daughters. William Striplin at St Dominick employed one daughter and one son on his market garden, two other daughters and his wife took produce to market and another son was a punnet maker. Mary Bennett worked her market garden with her son and daughter-in-law. However, some farmers and market gardeners did regularly employ help. Daniel Vosper employed one man on his five and a half acres, and at Bere Ferrers Thomas Daw employed two labourers and Joseph Procter employed two men and a boy. These last two were farming and gardening.¹⁵²

Working Practices

Using information from the 1851 and 1881 Devon census, fifty eight market gardeners had sons working with them, three had daughters and in five cases the wife was also listed as a market gardener. Nieces, nephews and grandsons were also recorded as helpers. In addition some gardeners recorded employing outside help. Two gardeners had apprentices, three had garden assistants helping them. There were rarely more than three men employed regularly although Maria Pyne of Topsham employed seven men, two women and a boy on her nineteen acres in Topsham in 1881. The other gardener to record employing women was George Pyne, also of Topsham, who employed three men and two women. This is not to say that women were not regularly employed in market gardens; most of their work was seasonal so they were not recorded in the census. The largest number of employees recorded by a market gardener was by Charles Sclater who employed ten men and four boys, but although he described himself in the census as a market gardener, he was more of a nurseryman. This number is small compared to another nurseryman, James Veitch, who employed 65 men and 7 boys to work on 47 acres. This indicates a major difference in working practices of nurserymen and market gardeners. However labour intensive market gardening was at busy times of the year, there was neither the money, nor the work to employ a large staff all the year round. As it was the cost of fruit picking was estimated to be 25 percent of the value of the crop.

James Barnes, of Bickton, spent his early years in a succession of market gardens in and around London where he gained experience in a variety of methods of fruit and vegetable growing. He spent four years with a cucumber and mushroom grower who also grew grapes, pineapples and melons and forced early fruits and flowering plants. He then went to a garden where he had charge of 1000 lights of framing plus 2600 hand and bell glasses for cucumbers, melons and early potatoes and for forcing asparagus and sea-kale. He moved on to work with a grower of grapes, peaches, pines and strawberries, who also grew salads, fruit and vegetables. From there he went to a grower of outdoor fruit where there were 26 acres under the spade and 6000 lights and 1200 hand and bell glasses.

According to Barnes, wages were paid either daily, twice or three times a week or on a Saturday evening. Lodgings for a worker was not easy to come by and expensive, sometimes taking a quarter of his wages. 'I have worked and been paid, at the rate of ten days a week, but generally worked and was paid for eight days through the season'. In other words, there was constant work, some of it piece work. To be paid eight days a week was a form of overtime pay, acknowledging that the worker was working far longer hours than for a normal day. Most of the workmen on this latter garden were Irish and, according to Barnes, very hard workers. He had not long been in Devon when this was written and his admiration for the market garden labourers is very apparent.¹⁵³

Larger gardens such as those around London employed many men and women at various times throughout the year to undertake such tasks as caterpillar picking, planting, weeding, hoeing and harvesting. The labour cost of the Neat House gardens near Westminster, was estimated at £35 per acre at the end of the eighteenth century, out of total costs of £80 per year.¹⁵⁴ All market gardeners worked long hours. An early start was essential to pick produce at its best and not dried out by the heat of the day. Carriers left early to transport produce to a station or market.

The experience Barnes gained through his work in the market gardens was to stand him in good stead for the future. He became an expert in growing pineapples, and wrote a book entitled *The Pineapple; its culture, uses and history*, and co-wrote a book on asparagus culture with William Robinson. A prolific writer for *Gardener's Magazine* he gave advice on vegetable production, garden tools and a variety of propagating methods and regularly wrote the kitchen garden section of *The Cottage Gardener*. Barnes

estimated the cost to the market gardener of rent, taxes, manure and horses to average £50 per acre. Although he does not say so, these costs almost certainly excluded that of labour. While these costs indicate the degree of potential profit in the business, they also demonstrate the risks if weather was poor or if crops failed. By the end of the nineteenth century turnover was high for those involved in market gardening. The estimated value of crops from Worthing was £20,000 for tomatoes and £14,000 for other crops.¹⁵⁵

In the right areas there was plenty of money to be made in the industry. However, according to a letter written by R.L. from West Sussex in *The Garden*, very little of this filtered down to the workers who considered themselves ‘undervalued’, overworked and poorly paid. Wages were set at 16s a week for outdoor workers, 17s to 18s a week for those working under glass, this to compensate for working an additional fifteen hours on a Sunday rota to stoke boilers and ventilate greenhouses. Goodchild suggests wages averaged 15s a week in the Tamar valley at the end of the nineteenth century, this was somewhat less than wages earned in Middlesex where there was competition from London labour markets and where the wages could be as high as 18s a week for men and 12s for women. By the first decade of the twentieth century Jebb stated that garden workers in the Tamar valley could receive from 22s to 25s a week fruit picking with women earning 16s to 18s and children up to 12s, but this work would only have been available at harvest time.¹⁵⁶ Despite these comparatively high wages, when an ordinary agricultural labourer might get 10s to 12s a week (albeit with a cottage), Bennett comments that plenty of labour kept wages low and people could be dismissed for minor offences such as ‘neglect’, ‘stopping on the road’, ‘idleness’ or for complaining about their wages.¹⁵⁷

The normal hours were 62 a week, in summer during daylight hours usually 5 am until 7 pm, and in winter 6 am to 6 pm, working by lamplight when necessary. Overtime was paid at 4d an hour. This compares with 2d an hour for most private gardeners (see Chapter Three). Foremen were considered to be no better than ‘slaves’. They had the responsibility to produce good crops and were therefore on duty 24 hours a day for a weekly pay of 22s in Sussex, 25s in Middlesex. However, if the crops were good, a bonus of 1s per ton on a tomato crop or 1s for every 100 dozen cucumbers picked could be given. ‘J.L.’ wrote in response to a previous article about the amount of fruit sent from Worthing in a year, which he says was 30 tons a week for three months and an average of five tons a week for the other nine months.¹⁵⁸ This could increase a

foreman's pay by a considerable amount, making the job worthwhile, despite the responsibility and long hours. The experience, which included management of a workforce, was invaluable if a gardener wanted to move to his own holding or, like Barnes, obtain a position as head gardener on an estate garden.

That there was money to be made in market gardening is evidenced by the fact that some gardeners purchased property of their own. William Milford, market gardener of Tiverton bought a well-stocked walled garden with stable and coach house in the centre of Washfield in 1890 with approximately half an acre 'well adapted for the erection of a Gentlemen's Residence' for £111.¹⁵⁹ Although he may have been interested in the garden, it is doubtful that he would have paid that money for such a small amount of land unless he had the intention of building a house on the property. He was more likely looking to build a retirement home so that his son could take over the farmhouse in Tiverton. Thomas Northcott of Laira Place, Plymouth, on his death, left property (three houses) and money valued at £2,062.10s.9d.¹⁶⁰

When growing vegetables it was possible to take three crops a year if there was a sufficient area of glass to prolong the growing period. 'French gardening' was practised at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. This was an intensive system of narrow beds covered with frame lights and bell jars. It was generally salad crops that were grown using this method, but it was also suitable for cabbages, cauliflowers, turnips, tomatoes and melons. The system was not used a great deal in the south-west, probably because the climate was sufficiently mild that it was possible to grow three crops a year out of doors without glass. It was popular however at Bengeworth in Worcestershire, Mayland in Essex and Thatcham in Berkshire.¹⁶¹ Vegetables were planted in rows, interplanted with faster growing crops or grown in raised beds. Cornish gardeners used a system of planting potatoes between rows of brussels sprouts in order to use the land more intensively.¹⁶²

Trench digging was practised by many gardeners. The ground was dug over once by spade to remove weeds, then a second time to add manure. Full trenching excavated the land to two spade depths.¹⁶³ This could be done before each crop was planted, ensuring that some ground was dug at least three times a year which was an alternative method of increasing fertility in the soil.

Manures

As the notion of soil fertility was understood gardeners looked for cheap and effective manures and fertilisers. All gardeners made the use of a large range of materials to use to add fertility to their land. Organic matter included farmyard manure, dung from pigs, sheep, cattle and horses. Peat was taken from the moors. Soot was purchased from the local sweep, mixed with animal dung then stirred into water and allowed to settle. The resulting liquor made a simple but powerful stimulant. Soot was also painted on fruit trees to prevent birds from eating the buds.¹⁶⁴ Near the coast, bone manure and guano were imported, the latter from Bolivia, Peru and Texas.¹⁶⁵ Guano was supplied at thirty shillings for a ton. There were several suppliers in the county including George Lacey at Okehampton, Edward Mortimore at Ashburton and William Rendle in Plymouth.¹⁶⁶ Pigot's *Directory* proclaimed an 'excellent manure is formed by the mixture of lime and earth with bruised and damaged pilchards, and the refuse salt used in curing them'.¹⁶⁷ Gardeners made their own compost from leaves and waste material.

Inorganic manures included ashes from wood, coal, soot, charcoal, lime and coprolites (the fossilised excrement of animals). Marl was added to heavy land. Gardeners made full use of living near the coast to collect seaweed from the rocks at Saltash, sea salt from Hartland, Bude and Bigbury and, as stated in Thompson's *Gardener's Assistant*:

In Devonshire and Cornwall, immense quantities of shell-sand, a calcareous sand, consisting chiefly of sand and the remains of shells, together with a little organic matter – are carried many miles inland, for the purpose of applying it to the land.¹⁶⁸

Seaweed cost 6d per load, and 'beach' 5d per load.¹⁶⁹ Marl, ashes, lime and farmyard manure were also used. Fraser recommended a compost mixture of sand, mud from lanes and dung.¹⁷⁰ These were supplemented with river dredgings, stable manure and street sweepings.¹⁷¹ Dung and ashes were bought at Kitley in 1832, culm in 1854, mud and ashes at Horswell.¹⁷² Peat purchased from Walkhampton, and Yettington Commons was used by private gardeners and nurserymen alike.¹⁷³ Any substance that would rot down was utilized, such as night-soil, bones, blood and skins of animals.¹⁷⁴ From the 1860s manufactured manures became more popular with gardeners, 'bone dust' was used at Blackpool in 1866 and at Stevenstone in 1877 and 'artificial manure' (super-phosphate) was purchased from Lawes & Co in 1880 for Blackpool.¹⁷⁵ With a high

nitrogen content, guano, initially imported from Peru in 1835, was another fertiliser which proved very popular with gardeners.¹⁷⁶

Market gardeners offered a refuse collection service which benefited both themselves and local businesses. However, most manures smelt very unpleasant and, where market gardens were based in towns, there were curfews for transporting the material so that it would not cause offence. Several men were prosecuted for breaking this curfew to collect or deliver manure in Exeter. With their names on their carts, which acted as advertisements, it must have been easy to identify these men. Henry King of Union Road, Exeter St Sidwell's was prosecuted for carting manure through the town at 4.15 pm. He claimed it was horse manure and therefore not 'noisome'.¹⁷⁷ John Capron's men were prosecuted for carting 'putrid dung' through the streets on the morning of 26th September 1858. He said he was unaware that his men were late.¹⁷⁸ George Salter, working on behalf of Charles Sclater, was fined 10s including expenses for 'taking out a load of dung in a putrid state from a slaughterhouse'. His defence was that he thought he could go out at any time after nine o'clock at night.¹⁷⁹

Pests and disease were a constant problem to the gardener. Blight attacked gooseberry bushes, onions, parsnips beans and potatoes. Birds ate buds from fruit trees, mice ate peas and rabbits ate emerging crops.¹⁸⁰ Remedies were found to deal with these. Tobacco was used for a multitude of ills; inside the greenhouse as vapour and on fruit bushes as a wash. Many remedies were often labour intensive; ideas were passed from gardener to gardener by word of mouth or through gardening journals. For example, a tip from a market gardener to make ridges over young peas as they appear to prevent birds from pecking out the tips was passed on to one of the editors of *The Garden*. He then included it as a short item in the journal advising other gardeners of the method.¹⁸¹ Children were employed to scare birds which were also shot or trapped. Caterpillars were picked from bushes by hand by women and children. An alternative method was to syringe with a mixture of hellebore or foxglove boiled in water.¹⁸² A mole and rat catcher would be paid by the numbers of animals caught, mousetraps would be set in greenhouses every night. Rabbits and hares had been protected as game to be available to be hunted by the owner of the land, but the 1881 Ground Game Act allowed occupiers of land to destroy these pests despite any clauses to the contrary in their leases.¹⁸³

Advice for market gardeners came from contemporary journals. The two most popular were the *Journal of Horticulture* (weekly 3d) and *Gardener's Chronicle* established in 1841 available Fridays at 5d.¹⁸⁴ Other specialist journals also catered exclusively for the horticultural trade, most notably *Horticultural Adviser* (started in Nottingham in 1883), the *Horticultural Times* (1885), *Covent Market Gazette*, *Market Record* (also 1885) and *Journal of Greengrocery, Fruit and Flowers and Greengrocer, Fruiterer and Market Gardener* (1895). *The Garden* too had a regular column written by market gardeners such as James Groom of Gosport, reporting on what was in season, which was the best variety to plant, different methods of planting and, of great importance to all gardeners, the weather. It is not clear whether smaller market gardeners would have had access to these or would have had time to read them. Books sold for the use of gardeners included Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* and his *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*. The local press such as the *Exeter Flying Post* also printed extracts from the *Gardener's Chronicle* for local readers.¹⁸⁵

Some questions in the Royal Horticultural Society examinations for gardeners were specifically aimed at those selling vegetables. For example, question number '13' in 1894 asked the student to 'Describe the culture of Cucumbers and Tomatoes under glass and show their value as crops for market purposes'.¹⁸⁶ Masters and Douglas, examiners were worried that:

...many young gardeners and mechanics, who cultivate small gardens and allotments, but who have not had the opportunity of regular tuition and systematic study, have taken a lower place than they otherwise would have done, because, they have failed to grasp the significance of the questions.¹⁸⁷

It was considered important by forward thinking gardeners that there should be an interchange of ideas. Gardeners corresponded with each other, not only within Britain, but also with gardeners in Europe. The French style of market gardening was considered by some to be superior to the English and many gardeners went to France to learn their techniques. As the reputation of British trained gardeners improved, this became a reciprocal arrangement and the 'Société Francaise d'Horticulture de Londres' was set up to promote the exchange of English and French trainees.¹⁸⁸

Practical help also came from horticultural associations and societies. The Agricultural and Horticultural Association was founded by E. O. Greening in 1867 for market

gardeners around London. This acted as a co-operative society for bulk sales and purchase.¹⁸⁹ Other co-operative societies were set up for marketing produce, but these mostly benefited those areas where there was intensive growing such as at Pershore in Worcestershire.¹⁹⁰ Strawberries were grown by the Chartist Co-operative Land Society on the 280 acre estate at Dodford near Kidderminster. Varieties included 'Sir Charles Napier', 'Paxton', 'President' and 'Scarlet Carolina', the latter for jam.¹⁹¹ Exhibitions were arranged by horticultural and agricultural societies to showcase perfect examples of garden produce, but the former seemed to be mostly aimed at private gardeners and nurserymen rather than market gardeners.

Markets

Early market gardeners sold most of their produce direct to local markets which were held in nearby towns. Jonathan Barry estimates that, in the early modern period, very few parts of the south west were more than seven miles from a market town. This would have enabled the gardener (or more often his wife or daughter) to reach the market, sell their goods and return home again on the same day.¹⁹² Although later some of these markets failed there were sufficient outlets to support the sale of vegetables. Commercial gardeners supplied victualling yards for the navy and helped to provision hospitals and prisons. Devon's ports, including Plymouth, Exeter, Dartmouth, Teignmouth, Brixham, Bideford and Barnstaple all had markets and market gardeners supplying the navy and passing merchant shipping.¹⁹³ For example market gardeners at Eggbuckland were supplying potatoes, cabbage, carrots, turnips and beans to the Plymouth market.¹⁹⁴

Another outlet for gardeners was institutions which had large numbers of people to feed and even where they had a garden of their own, still needed regular supplies of staples. Institutions inviting tenders from gardeners were the Royal Victualling Office in London which required vegetables to be supplied for the Royal Naval hospitals at Haslar and Plymouth.¹⁹⁵ Tenders to supply 'Greens, Leeks and Potherbs', were also requested, not only for the hospitals at Plymouth, but also for 'the care and custody of Prisoners of War'. Suppliers in this case had to have guarantors who were prepared to put up a bond of £100 which lasted for the duration of the contract.¹⁹⁶ These tenders were for one year and were to be paid for 'by bills, bearing interest, 90 days after date'. The Plymouth Victualling Office specified which vegetables were needed, these

included cabbages or greens, onions or leeks, turnips, potatoes and carrots.¹⁹⁷ In the first decade of the nineteenth century John Boon of Eggbuckland, John Helson of Thornhill and John Boon of Plymouth all had contracts with the Victualling Board to supply, 'cabbages (stript of roots & stalks) or greens, onions (dry and green) or leeks as required'. Root crops would only be accepted in the case of, 'absolute necessity from failure of crops' of cabbages and greens. Each year, as competition increased, the price of the tenders were reduced. From 1803 to 1806 the quoted price for onions or leeks had almost halved from 9s 9½d to 4s 10½d per hundredweight.¹⁹⁸

Other institutions requesting tenders for various supplies included the St Thomas' Union Workhouse which required a regular supply of potatoes to feed the inmates. In 1880, '120 score' of potatoes were required to be delivered fortnightly to the workhouse. Before the Union was formed the Corporation of the Poor in Exeter advertised for various commodities including 'good boiling pease'.¹⁹⁹

The most important market in London for produce was Covent Garden Market. This ancient market which had been in existence since a charter was granted by Charles II to William the first Duke of Bedford in 1670, was the central collecting place for produce from all over the country. Here buyers from stores and hotels would come to purchase vegetables and flowers.²⁰⁰ Produce was delivered to the market in the early morning. Strawberries were packed in punnets, then in boxes, tomatoes in strikes or pecks each holding twelve pounds. Up to two thousand hampers of cucumbers were received into the market daily between March and July.

The cost of sending produce to market varied according to the type of transport used. Produce that was shipped down the Tamar to Plymouth was charged at five shillings a ton.²⁰¹ Before the railways, Russell's carriers charged 14d per ton per mile for 'groceries' transported between Plymouth and Exeter.²⁰²

Market gardeners had a poor reputation for selling underweight quantities of vegetables. However, if they were caught then they could be fined. Robert Heard of Exeter St Thomas, for example was prosecuted for having a 14lb weight without a ring, which meant it was underweight by almost a pound, as well as other 'deficient' weights. His defence was that he never used these particular weights. However, he was found guilty and fined 5s and costs.²⁰³

Women as Market Gardeners

Figure 5:9 Occupations of Devon market gardener's wives

Name	Occupation	Parish	Date
Mary Cummings	Agricultural Labourer	Thorverton	1881
Caroline Bidgood	Assistant Market Gardener	Alphington	1881
Elizabeth Horn	Assistant Market Gardener	Sidbury	1881
Hannah Hortop	Domestic Servant	St Budeaux	1881
Sarah Drew	Dressmaker	Topsham	1881
Sarah Lowe	Dressmaker	Tormoham	1881
Susan Taylor	Dressmaker	Rewe	1881
Jane Lakeman	Gardener's Wife	Stoke Damerel	1881
Maria Actey	Glover	Chittlehampton	1881
Mary Distin	Green Grocer	Paignton	1881
Elizabeth Passmore	Greengrocer	Exeter Holy Trinity	1881
Harriet Hockaday	Grocer	Dawlish	1881
Charlotte Hart	Lace Maker	Bicton	1881
Emily Elliott	Lace Maker	Colaton Raleigh	1881
Mary Cole	Laundress	Tamerton Foliot	1881
Bessie Pudner	Laundress	Compton Gifford	1881
Maria Wollacott	Laundress	Tormoham	1881
Mary Pane	Laundress	Tormoham	1881
Susanna Fey	Laundress	St Budeaux	1851
Mary Way	Laundress	Kingsteignton	1881
Johanna Tozer	Lodging House Keeper	Paignton	1881
Maria Tucker	Lodging House Keeper	Ilfracombe	1881
Mary Gilson	Market Gardener	Tormoham	1851
Ann Broad	Market Gardener	Broad Clist	1881
Mary Hearn	Market Gardener	Silverton	1881
Sarah Harris	Market Gardener	Woodbury	1881
Sarah Morrish	Market Gardener	West Teignmouth	1881
Mary Northcott	Market Gardener	Pennycross	1881
Ellen Pearce	Market Woman	Topsham	1881
Sarah Drew	Milkmaid	Topsham	1881
Joan Welsman	Schoolmistress	Honiton	1851
Elizabeth Tucker	Shopkeeper	Cheriton Fitzpaine	1881
Caroline Coles	Washerwoman	East Budleigh	1881

Source: Devon Census 1851; Devon Census 1881.

The majority of women market gardeners had carried on the business when widowed, sometimes with the help of sons, grandsons or nephews. In the 1881 Devon census there were thirty four women who recorded their occupation as market gardener, twenty-five of these were widows, six were wives, two unmarried. Mary Northcott of Pennycross was listed as both head and wife. Jesse Horn was an unmarried daughter aged 22 and Eliza Davey aged 32 was niece to Ann Sercombe market gardener at Exeter Holy Trinity. Eleven further market gardeners were listed in directories as 'Mrs', although

this could have been a courtesy title; it is likely that they were widows too. Women who worked alongside their husbands often listed their occupation as 'wife' and nineteen per cent had done so, suggesting a high proportion of women were actively helping in the gardens. Many more would have helped their husbands, but this was not stated on the census returns, there being much under-recording of women's occupation in the later census.²⁰⁴ It was usually the women's job to take surplus fruit and vegetables to market or to sell it from their own homes and several women took this one stage further by setting up in business as market women, greengrocers and fruiterers.

Market gardeners' wives and children often worked to provide an additional income. Of the few who had recorded an occupation, the most common was as market gardener, with laundress coming second and dressmaker third. However, other occupations were listed such as, milkmaid, lace-maker, grocer, greengrocer, market woman and shopkeeper (see Figure 5:9). The latter four occupations demonstrate the link with market gardening. Children were often apprenticed to a trade, daughters followed their mothers as dressmakers or laundresses and sons followed a variety of trades, including carpenters, tailors, warehousemen, butchers and labourers. Many helped with their parents in the gardens, listed as garden assistant, gardener, or 'helps at home'.²⁰⁵

Women who worked in market gardens did not have an easy life although they worked indoors during the worst of the winter on a variety of tasks from mending sacks to sorting potatoes. They prepared cuttings of fruit bushes and made pegs for layering. Outdoor winter work included pulling turnips and sprout picking. In the spring they picked and bunched early flowers such as violets and wallflowers. Other jobs through the year included stone-picking and weeding, harvesting fruit and vegetables. Paid from a third to two fifths of men's wages, they did not have to start until 8 am in winter, but in summer could be strawberry picking from three o'clock in the morning.²⁰⁶ Their dress was unsuitable for outdoor work especially in wet weather as skirts became wet and heavy and took a long time to dry. Alfred Austin commented:²⁰⁷

The clothing of women employed in field-labour would appear to be inadequate...The upper parts of the underclothes of women at work even their stays, quickly become wet through with perspiration, whilst the lower parts cannot escape getting equally wet in nearly every kind of work they are engaged in, except in the driest weather. It not unfrequently happens that a woman, on returning home from work, is obliged to go to bed for an hour or two to allow her clothes to be dried. It is also by no means uncommon for her, if she does not

do this, to put them on again the next morning nearly as wet as when she took them off.

In addition to working in the field married women still had to manage the housekeeping at home and care for children.

Competition

There was a strong competitive spirit between gardeners on estates, in nurseries and in market gardens. Their aim was to produce the largest, the tastiest (these two did not always go together), the best quality, the earliest or rarest vegetables and fruit. Growers around large cities faced competition from rural growers. They also faced higher labour rates as there was more alternative employment in towns than in the countryside.

By the end of the century, market gardeners were also facing competition from abroad. Cauliflowers were imported from Italy, apples from America, pears, plums and cherries from Europe. The value of imports of raw fruit from abroad had risen to over five and a half million pounds, an increase in two and a quarter million from 1871. In 1894 Alfred George, a former head gardener at Bicton, advised gardeners to 'pay greater attention to the cultivation of apples'. He warned that the Canadians were exporting 70,000 barrels of apples weekly into England and thought that Devon gardeners and farmers 'could grow apples equal to if not better than those of Canada'.²⁰⁸ However, competition helped as an incentive to look for better stocks and improved methods of gardening.

Summary

There had to be the right combination of climate, soil and situation to enable a market gardening industry to grow at a distance from major markets. Devon not only has the South Hams, which has a combination of good soil, mild climate and plenty of rainfall, but also North Devon has warm sheltered valleys. Both south and north Devon had access to the coast and later to the railways for transport to markets. The Tamar valley had river transport to Plymouth.

Land had to be available which was not already utilised for other purposes such as industry, sport or housing. Market gardening seemed to be successful in areas where there was an absent landlord. This appears to be true at Evesham where the Dean and Chapter of Westminster owned much of the land.²⁰⁹ Much of the Devon side of the Tamar valley was owned by the Duke of Bedford who continued the pastoral economy

encouraged by the previous owners, the Benedictine Abbey of Tavistock.²¹⁰ Lord Mount Edgcumbe was also a major landholder in the region. At Evesham and in the Tamar valley there were many small farms and hamlets rather than large tracts of land and in the case of the latter, it would have been difficult to farm in any other way on such steep slopes.

Rents were affordable when there was not a bill for regular labour. Plots were small and rents not all due at the same time, which helped. Land was often sold in small lots, and crops were sufficiently rewarding to enable the more successful grower to lease or purchase his own land.

Where there was no overall landlord such as at Combe Martin there were many small landowners. Twenty-five per cent of the gardeners identified in this parish occupied between 1½ and 8½ acres of land including Edwin and Isaac Challacombe, the Creeks, and Thomas Ridge.²¹¹

Local markets provided a nearby outlet with minimal costs of carriage. More lucrative markets further afield were only worth growing for if the cost of carriage could be offset by the revenue received. Nineteenth century railways opened up distant markets for some growers, but led to a loss of gardens within large urban areas. One small plot 'behind the Red Cow Inn' at St David's in Exeter comprising one acre and eight perches was advertised for sale as 'capable of being converted into a delightful cottage residence, in a romantic and picturesque situation'. This had been let to John Burnett as a yearly tenant and was described as nursery or garden ground.²¹² Compensation paid for garden stocks however, could have led to increased capital for reinvestment. The railways had their own advantages, increasing the tourist industry locally which led to a demand for soft fruit such as raspberries and strawberries for cream teas. Gardeners were forced to move to the outskirts of towns as many gardens were sold for residential homes. Heavitree, Topsham, Alphington and Kenton became market gardening areas around Exeter, and Plymouth too was surrounded by growers taking advantage of the sea and river transport.

The combination of spade labour, the heavy use of manure, hotbeds and glass, and inter-cropping methods of the market gardeners surrounding London, produced more and varied produce compared to that of the local farmers. Yield per acre for market

gardeners could be as much as £100 to £200 per acre, but for farmer gardeners using a plough the yield was only £50 per acre.²¹³ Productivity of market gardeners was so high that estate owners urged their gardeners to study these methods for use in kitchen gardens to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables produced every year.²¹⁴

One of the reasons why so many varieties of vegetables and fruit were grown was to increase the period when fresh fruit and vegetables were available. Another was due to problems of storage. Different produce had different maturity times thus extending the growing season. New methods, encouraged by better communication between gardeners, led to increasing output throughout the century.

There was a fine line in some areas between market gardening and work undertaken by nurserymen, but generally market gardeners sold direct in a market or had a shop on the premises or to which they sent their supplies. Webber maintains that it was because nurserymen sold direct to the gentry and the general public that they became better known than most market gardeners.²¹⁵ However, some who started their careers as market gardeners became nurserymen as did the Sclaters of Exeter and the Treseders of Truro.²¹⁶ Assbee in 1897, while admiring the old fashioned market gardeners of Queen Victoria's reign, looked forward when he said:

let us be thankful that his place is being so well filled with sons and successors possessing all the sterling good qualities of the father, and in addition thereto a superior education, newer and wider ideas of business, and an energy, perseverance, and skill in production which have raised our market gardening industry into a position of the highest national importance.²¹⁷

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² William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon including The City of Exeter* 2nd edn (Sheffield and London, 1850); *Census PRO HO107 Filleigh*, 1851; *Census PRO RG11 Bishop's Hull, Somerset*, 1881.

³ *EFP* 30.07.1879, 7f; 25.03.1889, 1e; 28.11.1889, 1e.

⁴ J. Assbee, 'The Progress of Market Garden Cultivation During Queen Victoria's Reign', *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society (JRHS)* 21:3 (1898), 393-412., 393.

⁵ Sarah Wilmot, 'Farming in the Nineteenth Century', in *Historical Atlas of South-West England* ed by Roger Kain and William Ravenhill (Exeter, 1999), 269-272, 270.

⁶ *PRO RG11 1881 British Census and National Index: England, Scotland, Wales, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Royal Navy: Southwestern Region, Devon, Cornwall* (Church of the Latter Day Saints, 1999) [CD-ROM].

⁷ *Census (1881) Vol III, ages, condition as to marriage, occupations and birth-places of the people* (PP 1883, LXXX).

⁸ *Census PRO RG11 1881* [CD]; *Census (1851): population tables, part II: ages, civil condition, occupations and birth-places of the people* (PP 1854, LXXXVIII vol 1); *Census (1881) ages*; *PRO*

HO107 1851 *British Census Devon, Norfolk and Warwick Only* (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints: 1997) [CD-ROM].

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¹⁰ *Census Enumerators' Returns; Kelly's Directory of Devonshire* (1883); *White's Directory of Devonshire* (1878-9).

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¹⁴ *Census PRO RG11, 1881* [CD]; *PRO RG12 Plympton St Mary, 1891* [microfiche].

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¹⁶ J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London, 1822), 1201.

¹⁷ Assbee, 'Market Garden', 393.

¹⁸ L. Jebb, *The Small Holdings of England: A Survey of Various Existing Systems* (London, 1907).

¹⁹ Jebb, *Small Holdings*, 267-8.

²⁰ Frank Booker, *Industrial Archaeology of the Tamar Valley* (Newton Abbot, 1967), 228-239.

²¹ Ronald Webber, *Market Gardening: The History of Commercial Flower, Fruit and Vegetable Growing* (Newton Abbot, 1972), 166.

²² Webber, *Market Gardening*, 166.

²³ *Kelly's* (1897); *Census PRO RG12-13, Combe Martin, 1891, 1901*; *PRO HO107 Combe Martin, 1851* [CD].

²⁴ NDRO P88 (1890); North Devon Athenaeum 20/10J.

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²⁶ Charles Vancouver, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Devon* [London, 1808]; repr. (Newton Abbot, 1969), 235.

²⁷ Michael Duffy, 'The Establishment of the Western Squadron as the Linchpin of British Naval Strategy' in *Parameters of British Naval Power 1650-1850* ed. by Michael Duffy (Exeter, 1992), 68.

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²⁹ Jeremiah Milles *Questionnaire* Part 1 MSS in Bodleian Library, c1756 [microfilm]; *White's* (1850), 439.

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- ⁵⁶ Bennett, *Middlesex*, 33.
- ⁵⁷ Christopher Taylor, *Roads and Tracks of Britain* (London, 1979), 155.
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- ⁹⁰ NDRO B170 add/36/1.
- ⁹¹ *Census* PRO RG12 Bishops Tawton, 1891.
- ⁹² *Census* PRO RG11, 1881 [CD]; *Census* HO107 1851 [CD].
- ⁹³ *Census* RG12 1881 Devon; RG13 Kingskerswell, 1901.
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- ¹⁰⁴ EFP 14.03.1877, 1b.
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- ¹⁰⁸ PWDRO 874/3/62.
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- ¹¹⁰ G. E. Mingay, *Land and Society in England 1750-1980* (London, 1994), 213.
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- ¹¹³ Caird, *Agriculture*, 50.
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- ¹⁴² Webber, *Market Gardening*, 163-5.
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- ¹⁵⁹ DRO 49/9/1/613.
- ¹⁶⁰ PWDRO 831/160.
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- ¹⁷⁶ NDRO B170 add/91.
- ¹⁷⁷ EFP 3.01.1877, 7c.
- ¹⁷⁸ EFP 7.10.1858.
- ¹⁷⁹ EFP 9.10.1878, 3e.
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- ¹⁸¹ *The Garden* 10.05.1890, p441. By the time the peas have broken through the soil for the second time, they are too strong for the birds to bother them.
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- ¹⁸⁵ EFP 24.04. 1878, 3b, 26.09.1883, 2f.
- ¹⁸⁶ *JRHS* 17:1 (1894), 69.
- ¹⁸⁷ Maxwell T. Masters and James Douglas, Examiners, *JRHS* 19:1 (1895), 2.
- ¹⁸⁸ *The Garden* 15.02.1890, 146.
- ¹⁸⁹ Orwin and Whetham, *British Agriculture*, 263.
- ¹⁹⁰ Webber, *Market Gardening*, 108-9.
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- ¹⁹² Richard Holt and Gervase Rosser (eds.), *The Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History* (London, 1990), 60; Jonathan Barry, 'Towns and processes of urbanization in the early modern period' in *Historical Atlas of South-West England* ed. by Roger Kain and William Ravenhill (Exeter, 1999), 413-425, 420.
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- ¹⁹⁴ Stanes, 'Devon Agriculture' 43-65, 54.
- ¹⁹⁵ EFP 11.12.1817, 3d.
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- ²⁰⁷ *Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture*, PP (1843), VII, Report by Alfred Austin, 22.
- ²⁰⁸ *EFP* 24.02.1894, 2a.
- ²⁰⁹ Martin, 'Evesham', 41-50, 42.
- ²¹⁰ Booker, *Industrial*, 15.
- ²¹¹ *Census PRO RG11 Devon, 1881; Return of Owners of Land, 1873, England and Wales Vol 1 Devon* (London, 1875).
- ²¹² *EFP* 5.12.1833, 3f.
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CHAPTER SIX

The Élite: Nurserymen of Devon

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CHAPTER SIX

The Élite: Nurserymen of Devon

To enter on the subject of nursery-culture would embrace almost every part of gardening: since no department requires a more general knowledge, or so much attention and practical adroitness.¹

Although head gardeners had reached the top of their career hierarchy with many set for life in substantial houses in estate gardens with servants of their own, it was the nurserymen who were considered middle-class, and who were wealthier than other gardeners. Specialisation and a wealthy customer base had ensured that nurserymen were more influential than other gardeners except perhaps for head gardeners. This accords with Harold Perkin's theory that:

...specialization leads directly to professionalism, where being a member of a particular profession helps enhance their status, increase their incomes and protect their skills from competition.²

Introduction

Nurserymen were very important and influential in the gardening world of the nineteenth century. They designed and advised on the layout of country estates, parks and private gardens and stocked them with trees, plants, seeds and equipment. Professional gardeners trained in nurseries, market gardeners grew seeds and plants to supply them and head gardeners, 'who had acquired a little capital',³ became nurserymen as part of their career progression.⁴ As businessmen, proprietors of nurseries had higher status than most in the gardening profession, many becoming gentlemen. In his gardening encyclopaedia of 1822, John Claudius Loudon called nurserymen, 'the highest species of tradesmen gardener', recognising that an important part of their work was in retailing, not just in raising plants. He also acknowledged the hierarchy within the nursery business:

... the simplest variety of nursery gardener is he who confines himself to the rearing of hedge plants and forest trees; the highest, he who to all the hardy trees and plants maintains at the same time a collection of tender exotics.⁵

Loudon highlighted what was expected of a nurseryman, saying:

His business is to originate from seed, or, by other means of propagation, every species of vegetable, hardy or exotic, grown in gardens, to rear and train them for sale, and to pack or encase them, so as they may be sent with safety to distant places.⁶

To enhance their reputation, nurserymen became responsible for setting the standards for good quality plants, which included the cleanliness and fertility of seeds which were ‘proved before sold’.⁷ They sent explorers abroad to bring back seeds and cuttings from exotic places. Plants were first trialled to see how they grew, then frequently hybridised to make them sturdier and more suitable to the British climate, or more colourful to accommodate Victorian taste. Nursery gardens, shops and horticultural shows were used to display the best quality plants to the public; visits from the gentry and their head gardeners were particularly encouraged. Nursery catalogues supplied to customers were informative, entertaining and instructive and illustrated with the latest introductions and hybrids.

It was during the nineteenth century that many of the familiar names of today, such as Suttons of Reading (established 1806), and Thompson and Morgan (established 1855), became household names.⁸ In Devon, the Veitch’s of Exeter (established c1795), who had another branch in Chelsea, were the most successful nurserymen with customers spread throughout the country. However, there were others who became known through their displays of prize-winning plants at horticultural shows and who were brought to public attention through their advertisements or by mention in horticultural journals. Along with Veitch, it was the families of Lucombe and Pince, Sclater, Addiscott, Southwood and Dymond in Exeter, and Pontey and Rendle in Plymouth, who influenced what was planted in Devon’s gardens. There was also a host of smaller nurseries such as Curtis and Sanford of Torquay who specialised in roses, and Thomas Murley’s Victorian fernery at Lynton.

Devon eventually supported many nurserymen especially near the ports of Exeter, Plymouth, Barnstaple and Bideford. These locations helped with the introduction of new species of plants, many of which were seen in the county before being grown in London. In this chapter it will be seen that initially nurserymen aimed their wares at the wealthier sector of society, with advertisements which targeted ‘Noblemen and Gentlemen’⁹ but by the end of the nineteenth century, were also opening their gardens to interested and prospective customers from all classes.

Identification of Devon Nurserymen

In 1881 the number of nurserymen in Devon had increased by 164 per cent since 1851.¹⁰ This increase was less than the national figure for nurserymen and women in England and Wales which had increased by 190 per cent for the same period (see Figure 6:1 below). It has not been possible to make a direct comparison with the 1891 or 1901 census, because the figures for gardeners, who were not domestic servants, were amalgamated in those years to ‘gardeners (not domestic) and nurserymen, seedsmen and florists,’ which included market gardeners.¹¹

Figure 6:1. Numbers of nurserymen and florists working in Devon 1841 to 1881 compared with those for England and Wales

Nurserymen and Florists						
England and Wales				Devon		
Date	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1841	1413	23	1436	49	0	49
1851	2636	39	2675	85	0	85
1861	2838	79	2917	106	0	106
1871	5113	382	5495	147	4	151
1881	7021	734	7755	213	11	224

Source: Census.¹²

These figures are not completely accurate as there are no women represented in Devon until 1871, yet information taken from the enumerators’ returns show that Mary Russell in Sidmouth was a nursery-woman in 1851, and Harriett Kerswell, Harriett Southwood and Martha Brown were all proprietors of nurseries in 1861. The first two had businesses in Exeter St Thomas, the latter in Tamerton Foliot.¹³ These statistics also do not include daughters of nurserymen, such as the Sclater sisters who were listed as ‘nurseryman’s assistants’, nor daughters and wives who worked alongside parents and husbands.

One reason for the increase in the numbers of nurserymen throughout the century was due to the change in the way they were recorded. In 1851 and earlier, many nursery proprietors and their workforce were listed simply as ‘gardener’ or ‘agricultural labourer’. It was not until the 1860s that gardeners began to specify their occupation as ‘nurserymen’ or ‘nursery gardener’.

Figure 6:2. Distribution of nurseries in Devon by date of establishment

Area*	Pre 1800	1801- 1810	1811- 1820	1821- 1830	1831- 1840	1841- 1850	1851- 1860	1861- 1870	1871- 1880	1881- 1890	1891- 1900	Total
East Devon	0	1	2	2	0	2	7	11	14	14	26	69
Exeter	8	6	5	7	9	16	15	22	17	23	17	139
Mid Devon	0	0	0	1	1	4	3	6	6	5	8	30
North Devon	0	0	1	2	0	4	3	9	7	10	14	49
Plymouth	2	0	4	0	2	2	11	6	9	8	20	61
South Hams	0	0	1	4	0	3	7	4	5	7	4	32
Teignbridge	0	0	2	0	1	2	7	8	14	9	25	59
Torbay	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	3	6	10	16	41
Torridge	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	6	6	3	1	16
West Devon	0	1	1	0	0	1	5	4	2	5	9	27
	10	8	16	17	13	37	63	79	86	94	140	523

* Based on modern District and Unitary Authority areas.

Source: Gardener Database.

The above chart (Figure:6:2) demonstrates the steady growth in the numbers of new nurseries and their distribution throughout the county. The influence of the railway and the growth of the violet and daffodil industry can be seen in the figures for East Devon and Teignbridge. The railway enabled nurserymen to set up away from the two main cities of Exeter and Plymouth and to establish a business in areas influenced by tourism and urban expansion. From the 1870s the number of nurserymen who supplied Teignbridge and Torbay, ‘a summer holiday resort, and a place of winter residence’, grew steadily.¹⁴ The gentle climate of Devon and long coast-line had encouraged visitors to the county, many of whom made their homes in seaside resorts such as Torquay and Dawlish. ‘Everywhere hills and their slopes [are] covered with villas embowered in luxurious verdure’.¹⁵ The numbers of parks and gardens established during this period for the benefit, in part, of the tourists also led to a demand for trees and plants, especially for carpet-bedding displays and massed bedding with the use of ‘salvias, ageratums, heliotropes, petunias and verbenas’ influenced by the displays at showcase gardens such as the Crystal Palace Park at Sydenham.¹⁶ Even North Devon, where Ilfracombe had become ‘a fashionable watering place’, had its nurseries and ferneries to supply intrepid tourists visiting the rugged scenery of nearby Lynton and Lynmouth.¹⁷

The profession of nurseryman and market gardener often overlapped and were interrelated; market gardeners and seedsmen had nurseries of trees or grew seeds for the trade, and smaller nurserymen grew vegetables and fruit to supply local markets. William Hull at Tamerton Foliot, Henry Fouracre at Heavitree and James Bale from

Landkey began their careers as market gardeners but later became known as nurserymen. To differentiate between growers, trade directories divided commercial gardeners into two discrete sections, either 'Nurserymen, Seedsmen or Florists' or 'Market Gardeners'. To gain the maximum amount of business the same people would often list themselves in both sections. These included Charles Colwill of Sidmouth and William Milton of Down St Mary who were both market gardeners and Hugh Horn of Torquay, and William Crossman of Paignton who were nurserymen. Even the better known nurserymen such as Lucombe and Pince and the Sclater family advertised under both headings.¹⁸

There were differences, however, between these two sectors of commercial gardeners. Whereas the majority of market gardeners sold their produce through local or distant markets, nurserymen mostly sold their plants direct to the public or through their own retail outlets and, usually, to the wealthier members of society. They also had a wholesale market supplying plants direct to market gardeners.¹⁹ A market garden was a place of work, but nurseries were also places of show. In common with garden centres of today they had attractive gardens and glasshouses, designed to attract visitors and hence customers; both Charles Sclater in Exeter and William Rendle in Plymouth opened botanic gardens to the public as showcases for their products, and Lucombe and Pince's conservatory was well known for the unusual plants displayed there.²⁰ Market gardens tended to be sited on the outskirts of towns within easy reach of local markets, the railway or water transport (see Chapter Five). This was also true of nurseries but most were based in larger towns which were the meeting places of their customers. Lucombe, Pince & Co. invited 'such of the Nobility and Gentry who may visit Exeter during the Assizes' to visit their new purpose built seed shop at the nursery in Alphington Road.²¹ Even if they had land outside the town, nurserymen's shops were frequently in the centre. New Bridge Street, Fore Street and High Street in Exeter were home to nursery and seedsmen's shops, most notably Ford, Veitch, Mogridge and Randall. The High or Fore Street was also the trading place for nurserymen in other towns such as Kingsbridge, Totnes, Crediton, Honiton, Barnstaple, Bideford, Topsham, Sidmouth, Dawlish, Devonport, Exmouth and Brixham.²²

As with all gardeners there are problems of identification and classification of nurserymen. Some who listed themselves in trade directories have no corresponding listing as such in the census. This suggests that they either had a plot of land and were

growing plants or trees as a nursery business in addition to their main profession, or that they were acting as seed dealers, for example Charles Holcombe of Exeter St Sidwell's was a baker, Christopher Newcombe from Winkleigh was a wheelwright and Arthur Heard of Beaford was a carpenter and glazier. The sale of trees and seeds would have been a seasonal business and would easily have given time and opportunity to foster a second source of income.²³

A 'Florist' would either have covered all aspects of propagation and hybridization, or simply, as now, produced bouquets and floral decoration to order and sold flowers and plants raised by someone else. In 1881, Ann Soper was a florist with a stall at the Higher Market in Exeter, who sold the produce of her husband, a nurseryman at Belmont Nursery.²⁴ Nurserymen frequently employed their wives and daughters, and sometimes their sons, as 'florists'. If without a daughter of their own, then they might employ another female, as did Francis Fuller, who in 1891, at the Courtenay Nursery in Newton Abbot, employed Louisa Tan as a 'Florists Assistant'.²⁵

The profession of 'Seedsman' was equally ambiguous. Malcolm Thick in his study of the early seed industry suggests that seed growers were mostly market gardeners, many of whom were Protestant refugees from Europe.²⁶ In nineteenth century Devon both William Trenchard of Colyton, and Richard Delve of Morchard Bishop, a market gardener and farmer respectively, were seed growers. Whereas Richard Fildew of Honiton, a general dealer and seedsman, Stephen Yolland of Ashburton, a corn and seed dealer, and Thomas Battan of Holsworthy, an ironmonger and seedsman, were almost certainly purchasing seeds for retail.²⁷ Some merchants dealt with purely agricultural sales, like William Farrier of Dartmouth who was a corn merchant. Others, however, also imported bulbs and seeds for gardens, as did many nurserymen.²⁸ Nurseries frequently had a seeds department or a seeds shop creating even more confusion in identification.

To date 720 nurserymen and women have been identified who worked in Devon during the nineteenth century. This is less than five per cent of the total number of gardeners found for this period. Of these, the majority stated their occupation as 'nurseryman' or 'nursery gardener'. Within the census there was no distinction between someone who owned a nursery business or a gardener who worked in a nursery, although, in later census returns, a nursery foreman or manager would often specify his position. Neither

is it possible to distinguish between a ‘nursery gardener’ who worked in an estate nursery from one who worked in a commercial nursery. However, it has been possible to establish that twelve were managers, thirteen were clerks, twenty were foremen, forty-seven were labourers and one hundred and thirteen were proprietors (see Figure 6:3 below).

Figure 6:3. Breakdown of number of nursery gardeners identified

Occupation	Number
Apprentices	17
Clerks	13
Commercial travellers	8
Nurserymen	370
Nursery boys	5
Nursery carter	3
Nursery foremen	20
Nursery gardeners	108
Nursery labourers	47
Managers	12
Proprietors	113
Retired	4
TOTAL	720

Source: Gardener database.

Of the total, twenty-six were women; nine of whom were unmarried, and thirteen widowed, and two had been working alongside their husbands and continued in the business as widows. Fifteen were heads of the household, five were daughters, one a sister-in-law, one a sister. Women worked in nurseries as assistants, undertaking gardening and administrative tasks. Many had probably helped their husbands on the management side of the nursery business, writing letters or overseeing the business while their husbands were elsewhere. Most of the women who were proprietors of nurseries were widows, apart from Miss Sarah Woodrow and Miss Mary Ann Baker, both of Axminster, who were single women, Miss Baker had taken over from her father.²⁹ The number of women working in nurseries was much greater than this. Most were known as ‘florists’, or ‘shop assistants’; it is probable that many ‘florists’ in the census worked directly or indirectly for nurseries. Women also sold flowers produced by their husbands or fathers either at the local market, or from shops on a nursery site, or worked as casual labourers weeding, harvesting and packing.³⁰ Ann Tozer of St Saviour’s parish in Dartmouth was a seed seller, even though her husband was a mason, but she may have worked with her son John who was a gardener.³¹ Women’s

occupations were often not listed in the census because much of their work was casual or seasonal, or being part of the family business, not acknowledged.

Seedsmen have been excluded from this list unless they were part of a larger nursery business. There are other gardeners, who almost certainly worked in nurseries, who are not counted in the above figures. Many of these would have lived near to the main nurseries, for example, in Exeter St Thomas or Heavitree.³²

Not all proprietors of nurseries were nurserymen or women. James Searle, proprietor of Searle Street Gardens in Crediton and Addiscott's Nursery in Exeter, was a solicitor; to date, no familial link has been found between him and the Addiscott family.³³ Charles and William Addiscott, sons of Henry, the last Addiscott proprietor, both became travellers for the seed trade and had moved to live in London.³⁴ Searle could have bought an interest in the business; this would have been an investment for the purchaser and given much needed cash to the existing partner. Equally, he might have purchased the whole business as an investment.³⁵ Dr Robert Woodman, proprietor of Lucombe and Pince from 1871, however, was related to the original founder being the nephew of Robert Taylor Pince who was himself related by marriage to William Lucombe.³⁶

A major reason for the continuation of a successful nursery business was because many nursery establishments belonged to the same family through several generations. This was true for London nurseries where 'the management of nurseries was kept in the family if possible, sons, nephews and grandsons'.³⁷ The Veitch nursery was started by John Veitch in 1779 and run by his sons and grandsons for almost two hundred years; the business was sold in 1969.³⁸ Lucombe and Pince which began in the eighteenth century continued to be run by the descendants of William Lucombe until the 1890s, a total of one hundred and seventy years. William Ireland's nursery in Pilton, in north Devon, was inherited by his niece, Catherine Cornelius, who had been married to another nurseryman. The business was run by her son and his cousin both confusingly called John Cornelius. The Sclaters were freehold gardeners in Exeter from the beginning of the nineteenth century and became one of the best known nursery families in the city.

Nurserymen intermarried, therefore expanding the business or ensuring its longevity by keeping it in the family. A nursery could prosper even if there was no family to continue

the business, due to customer loyalty. Theodore Cuemel of Stoke Nurseries, was one of the lesser known nurserymen in Plymouth but still supplied some of the prominent estates in the area including Saltram at Plympton and Pentillie just over the border in Cornwall.³⁹ Alexander Pontey took over John Pontey's nursery in 1834 'as the said John Pontey is of the age of 71 and is desirous of retiring from business'. Although described as 'a distant relation', he had been working and living with John for the previous twenty years.⁴⁰ Alexander had no sons, so when he died in 1862 the business was continued by his widow, Mary Lyne Pontey. However, in 1871 she sold the business to Robert Coad Serpell, a biscuit manufacturer, for £3,800. The Serpells, Robert and his son Effingham Wilson Serpell, continued to trade under the name of Pontey.⁴¹ The firm had continued to supply Bowringsleigh, Kitley and Saltram when Alexander took over from John, as, in similar fashion, Pentillie and Kitley continued to purchase from Pontey's when it was owned and run by the Serpells.⁴²

Sometimes it was through specialisation that a market was created and ensured the success of a nursery; for example, James Walters became known as a famous rose grower with twelve acres of roses at the Mount Radford Nursery, Exeter, advertising them in 1897 as 'The best and cheapest in the world'. He even warranted an obituary in *The Garden* as well as in the *Devon Weekly Times*.⁴³ Edmund Gill at the Victoria Fernery, Lynton; Samuel Randall and Edward Sclater of Exeter St Thomas took advantage of the interest in fern collecting in the 1870s by specialising in the sale of ferns and related equipment.⁴⁴

Although proprietors of nurseries are easier to identify than many other gardeners, because leases, mortgages and invoices provide a paper trail which can be followed, it is still not easy to identify the men and women who worked in nursery gardens. Like most working gardeners they are largely ignored. John Harvey does not mention workers in his studies of early nurserymen, neither does Suzanne Treseder in her history of the Treseders of Truro.⁴⁵ Audrey le Lièvre writes more about head gardeners than the nurserymen of the title of her article and although *Hortus Veitchii* was written by a member of the Veitch family his knowledge of his early family history is somewhat vague.⁴⁶ It is Shirley Heriz-Smith who fills in the gaps of knowledge of the beginnings of the Veitch nurseries working partly from papers in a private collection.⁴⁷ Sue Shephard's history of the Veitch family is, unfortunately, unreferenced but includes details of the plant collectors who did so much to help make the fortunes of the Veitch

nurseries.⁴⁸ While much has been written about the Veitch businesses, there is very little about the less well-known Devon nurseries, although some private research has been undertaken by members of the Devon Gardens Trust and, most notably, by Trevor Wood of the Devon Branch of the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens.⁴⁹

One source that tells a little of the lives of a working nurseryman, his family and co-workers, is that of non-conformist Thomas Nicholl of Redruth in Cornwall. Two volumes of his diaries remain which cover a period of twenty-one years from 1834 to 1851. Frustratingly, although he makes daily entries about weather conditions, he tells little of the work of the nursery, probably taking it for granted. There are occasional notes as to what was planted, and where, as well as brief entries which show which estates he was supplying, these mostly in Cornwall. The largest part of the diary is taken up with details of his religious meetings and stark notes of births, deaths, marriages and emigrations. A few notable events such as the coronation of Queen Victoria and the visit of the Queen and Prince Albert to Redruth are also recorded. So was the visit of Tom Thumb; 'the remarkable American Dwarf was exhibited in the School Room today, he attracted considerable attention, his height 24 inches, weight 15 pounds Age 14 years'. A few entries in the back of each volume give details as to the wages Nicholls was paying his men and his amalgamated accounts for just three years.⁵⁰

Contemporary publications recorded disputes between nurserymen, changes of partnership, removal to new premises and disasters such as fires.⁵¹ Because nurserymen were well-known and had an important standing in local society, they also featured in the births, deaths and marriages section of the newspapers and a few warranted obituaries even if the latter were short:

'On 24 inst. At his house in St Thomas, aged 38, Mr. George Dymond of that Parish, Nurseryman, eldest son of Mr. John Dymond of this city and a member of the Society of Friends. By the early removal of this excellent and worthy man, society has lost an active and valuable member, and his sorrowing family and friends will long feel and mourn his irreparable loss'.⁵²

Horticultural and flower shows were also recorded which noted the exhibitors and prize winners. The better known nurseries receiving effusive praise for their exhibits as this report from *The Torquay and Tor Directory and General Advertiser* demonstrates:

Messrs. Veitch, of the Mount Radford nurseries, as usual, displayed their magnificent specimens, many of which had won prizes at the Metropolitan shows; amongst these were Ericas, Orchidaceons [sic] plants, and a gorgeous display of new Dahlias, including some very beautiful fancy varieties, Fuchsias, &c., &c. Messrs. Lucombe and Pince, Exeter Nurseries, who have not so regularly attended these exhibitions, made ample amends by contributing some of the most valuable plants in their collection, – the graceful Dove plant attracted general attention; their cut Roses were unequalled, and shew the perfection to which this favourite flower can be brought at all seasons. His Dahlias, Fuchsias, and Lobelias, were also very fine.

Messrs. Sclater, of Heavitree, and Messrs. Pontey of Plymouth, exhibited very perfect collections of cut Dahlias, Asters, Verbenas, Phlox, Aconite, Sclater's New Bowvardia [sic]. Mr. Morgan, of the Torbay Horticultural Establishment, Tor, richly furnished a large portion of the tent with Fuchsias, Lobelias, a fine specimen of the Silver Tree from Australia, and an extensive collection of cut flowers.⁵³

In the nineteenth century, as now, business matters were conducted in the public eye. In 1820, 150 glass panes were taken out of frames and 27 larger panes stolen from greenhouses owned by Lucombe and Pince. This was a major blow as March was a critical time in the growing season; glass was essential for their business and very expensive, especially the larger panes.⁵⁴ The impact of the crime was such that a reward of five guineas was offered for the apprehension of the thieves with a further reward, also of five guineas (£5.5s), for conviction.⁵⁵ At a time when the average labourer earned 10s a week, this was a large sum of money.

Nurserymen appeared in reports of the Quarter Sessions courts, although being small businessmen they were often more sinned against than being sinners themselves. Crimes involved plants that were obtained by false pretences from William Addiscott in 1841 and from Samuel Bale at Landkey in 1866. Henry Taylor was prosecuted for stealing a wheelbarrow from Charles Sclater in 1860; and money was embezzled from Lucombe and Pince in 1871 by George Porter, a gardener, and again by Alfred Mayne, a seedsman clerk, in 1873, both of whom worked for the nursery.⁵⁶

One case, which incited several people to write to their local newspapers in protest at the sentence, was that of James Vanstone of St Thomas in Exeter. Known as a 'Market Gardener', he was a rival grower of Lucombe and Pince and undercut their prices by selling plants cheaply in the local market. This he was able to do as he had lower overheads than a large nursery business. Vanstone stood accused of stealing a flower pot containing a heath plant, the whole, including pot, worth 5s, from Lucombe's nursery in Alphington Road. Witnesses against Vanstone included Mr. James Veitch.

The charge was changed to receiving, as it was asserted that his son John had actually stolen the plant. Despite the denials of both Vanstone and his son that there had been any plants stolen, Vanstone was found guilty and sentenced to be transported for ten years, even though this would have been his first crime.⁵⁷ Letters of support were printed in the press and representation was made to the King by locals, including Robert Vallance a solicitor, and it appears that Vanstone, although spending some time in prison, was reprieved from transportation.⁵⁸ He and his family were still trading at Foxhayes until the business was sold in 1893.⁵⁹

An earlier case, also reported in the *Exeter Flying Post*, was brought by Charles Sclater, nurseryman of St Sidwell's, against Arthur Bustard, market gardener of the same parish. This involved the release of a donkey which was being taken to the pound, having been found enjoying the produce of Mr. Sclater's nursery. If the donkey had been impounded a fine would have had to be paid for its release. The magistrates deemed the rescue unlawful and fined the defendant ten shillings plus expenses, or a fortnight's imprisonment.⁶⁰

Both these cases illustrate the competition between market gardeners and nurserymen, and the perceived threat from the former by the latter. Robert Pince had been a lawyer and, as seen above, could call on support from powerful friends. In general, nurserymen were wealthier and more influential than market gardeners, who were aspiring to become nurserymen. Their close links with the gentry and magistrates such as the Earl of Devon, Sir Stafford Northcote, Sir John Duckworth, and the Fulfords, to whom they supplied plants, made it difficult for those being prosecuted unless they had the support of someone equally influential. The Vanstones and the Bustards went on to become respectable nurserymen.

Reporting of bankruptcies and the consequent sale of stock and/or premises also provide information about the state of the nursery business. Several Devon nurserymen went through the bankruptcy process including Charles Sclater of the Summerlands Nursery, John Hooper of Honiton, Thomas Hutching of Axminster and Thomas Kingdon of Thorverton.⁶¹ It is not always clear why some men were bankrupt. The position of a nurseryman with its attendant financial risks was obviously too much for some proprietors who, like Paterson and Nicholl of Bishop's Nympton near South Molton in 1818, were in the wrong place at the wrong time, despite carrying stock similar to that

of more successful nurserymen.⁶² They were not the only ones who became bankrupt in the recession years that followed the Napoleonic Wars. George Huxham of North Huish and George Cox of Exeter St Sidwell also lost their businesses.⁶³ As F.M.L. Thompson writes:

Most bankrupts were down to earth, run-of-the-mill, businessmen, small traders, manufacturers, and shopkeepers who failed through some simple miscalculation, mismanagement, or adverse turn of the market, not because they were pursuing misconceived grandiose ambitions of financial or social aggrandisement.⁶⁴

There were many reasons for bankruptcy including lack of diversification. Paterson and Nicholl may have had problems in both marketing and transporting stock. Thomas Kingdon had had a fire at his nursery but that had been ten years prior to his bankruptcy.⁶⁵ William Ford had lost part of his land, taken for building, the year before he was made bankrupt.⁶⁶ Loudon commented in 1832 that 'Nurserymen are becoming bankrupts all over the country'. He blamed 'every gentleman's gardener, having once obtained a new plant propagates it for himself, his neighbours, and his master's friends'. This, of course, reduced the profit made by nurserymen on new introductions.⁶⁷

Most bankruptcies found to date happened in the first half of the nineteenth century. One exception was that of James Searle, proprietor of Addiscott's at Alphington Street, Exeter St Thomas. As mentioned above, Searle was a practising solicitor, not a nurseryman by trade and in 1892 the stock of both Addiscott's and Searle's nursery in Crediton were sold off to pay his debts.⁶⁸ Charles Sclater and Thomas Hutchings continued to trade as nurserymen after their bankruptcy was discharged.

Early History

The beginning of the nursery trade can be traced back to the thirteenth century: John Harvey suggests that 'interest in good varieties of fruit trees, especially pears and apples, had produced an international trade engaged in the import of continental varieties'.⁶⁹ He also speculates that some of the first commercial nurseries in Britain were based in religious institutions where surplus stock was sold to local gardeners.⁷⁰ Plants introduced into Britain as a result of Elizabethan expansion were held in the gardens of the nobility. As specimens increased in number, they were shared among wealthy garden owners and botanists. Professional skills of propagation, developed in the gardens of collectors, led to the establishment of specialist nurseries to provide seeds, plants and garden materials for sale. From early times nurseries were needed to

supply market gardens and private gardens where a head gardener was either unable to grow plants and trees in sufficient numbers, or did not grow a sufficient variety.

The Civil War in the seventeenth century devastated tree stocks, destroyed or used during the hostilities. Following a call from John Evelyn in his book *Sylva*, there was an intensive drive to restore plantations to Britain, to replace supplies which were needed for house and ship building.⁷¹ By the early eighteenth century Stephen Switzer had written detailed instructions on how to plant 'acorns and chesnuts'; which covered every aspect of tree propagation from the initial digging and clearing of the land, to the suggested spacing of seeds and manure to be used to fertilise the crop.⁷²

Peace-time gave the opportunity for land-owners to expand their gardens, which increased in size and complexity. Estate landscapes were split into several separate departments. Plantations were a source of income as well as beauty; orchards contained fruit trees which were being developed and grown in large numbers, their produce used for cooking, the production of cider and perry and for dessert. In this exciting time of regeneration new vegetable and fruit crops were introduced. To be able to grow exotic fruit such as pineapples, grapes and melons, which needed specialised growing conditions and care, was an outward manifestation of wealth. Kitchen gardeners were expected to provide a wider variety of produce over a longer growing period. Formal pleasure gardens with parterres and elaborate topiary were laid out, providing a rich visual display from the mansion and somewhere to walk when the weather permitted. These developments in garden fashion led to a consequent rise in nurserymen attempting to satisfy the demand for huge numbers of forest and fruit trees, hedging plants and evergreen shrubs, as well as the more prosaic herbs, flowers and vegetables required for kitchen gardens. Seedsman began to sell plants supplied from nurseries and nurseries stocked seeds from their own suppliers as well as from seedsman from Europe, Egypt and Brazil.⁷³

Initially, most of the large and famous nurseries were established in London, the social, cultural and legal capital of England, which drew in gentlemen from all parts of the country, many of whom took the opportunity to shop for their garden requirements while in town.⁷⁴ The Brompton Park nursery, set up with four partners in 1681, later known as London and Wise, was one of the largest and most influential nurseries in England. It also became one of the most expensive. The nursery supplied plant material and undertook designs for country gentlemen. The cost of plants, coupled with the

expense, risk and problems of transportation, ultimately led to the setting up of many regional nurseries.

Early nurseries aimed their products at a market where owners had sufficient land and could afford to buy large quantities of trees and, moreover, were expected to do so. Many estates already had their own nurseries usually for growing trees (see Figure 6:4 below).⁷⁵ Women and children collected acorns and tree seeds in autumn to be planted in nursery gardens to renew tree stocks, however, these did not always suffice to fulfil demand.⁷⁶ Nurseries at Nutwell Court and Buckland Abbey contained forest trees and apple trees grown on grafts.⁷⁷ Most of these were for plantations, or orchards but the gardener at Buckland Abbey ‘sent off by Russells Waggon to Exeter for Nutwell 50 Tulip Trees, and 10 Laburnums’. They also grew laurels for their shrubberies.⁷⁸

Figure 6:4. Plant list for Endsleigh tree nursery 1815

‘A List of Plants now Growing in Endsleigh Nursery Garden – 5 Oct 1815’	
60,500	Scotch Fir – 10,500 2 years Transp ^d , 50,000 1 year tr ^d
35,000	Larch – 4,000 2 years trans ^d
31,000	1 Do.
8,000	Spruce Fir – Mostly one year transplanted
200	Weymouth Pines – 2 years transp ^d
2,000	Ash – 3 years transplanted
33,000	Oak – 11,000 1 year transp ^d – 22,000 seedlings
450	Elms – 2 years transp ^d
30,000	Sycamore – 1 year transplanted
1,400	Beech – 1 year transplanted
20	Pine Asters – 3 years transp ^d
10,000	Birch – 1 year transp ^d
140	Silver Fir – 2 year transp ^d
1,000	Balm of Gilead – 1 year transp ^d
60,000	Quicks 2 years old
2,000	Crabs 2 years transp
1,400	Hollies 2 & 3 years transp
1,300	Laurels Common 2 & 3 years old
200	Yews 3 years old
400	Cockspur Thorns 3 & 4 feet high
30	Portugal Laurel 4 years old
50	Ilex Oak 4 years old
600	Shrubs of various sorts fit to plant out
250	Currant Trees 3 years old
250	Gooseberries Do
100	Fruit Trees of various Sorts

Source: DRO L1258M/SS/C/82

There were often problems with plants bought from London. Frequently they had been too long out of the ground, many suffered in transportation and there was no guarantee that they would arrive in good condition – at Nutwell Court trees arrived with their taproots removed.⁷⁹ Although it was cheaper to send plants by sea they were dependent upon tides, weather conditions and communication to say where and when they would arrive. Writing from Nutwell in 1751 Nicholas Rowe, the agent, complained to Sir Francis Drake that, ‘had not the man at the inn sent a messenger on purpose the next evening to acquaint they were there, they might have lain there don't know how long, no letter having come about them’.⁸⁰ Eleven years later he complained that:

The Weymouth Pines were brot here Saturday Evening & planted on Monday. They were heated in bringing, Some of ‘Em moldy & the roots breaking out, The Nut Sets were Budded above an Inch out.⁸¹

Even in the nineteenth century Thomas Nicholl had to wait three months and ten days for seeds sent from London to Cornwall.⁸² It was not until a railway network had covered the country that goods could move easily and quickly from one area to another, although this did not stop problems occurring. In 1868 Robert Lipscombe, Agent for Bicton, complained to the stationmaster about the poor state of plants sent from Dumfries. He suggested that the problem was the ‘double transference from narrow to broad and from broad to narrow gauge truck’.⁸³

As regional nurseries developed some began to specialise. East Anglian nurseries imported seeds and bulbs from Holland while Midlands’ nurserymen grew rich through supplying millions of hedging plants for miles of boundaries required by the Enclosure Acts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁸⁴ Devon nurseries specialised in imported exotics which could be grown in a mild climate, and in fruit and forest trees. The fashion of landscape gardening during the latter part of the eighteenth century, as practiced by Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown and his followers, called for vast numbers of trees. These were planted to create shelter belts, wilderness walks, clumps of trees in parkland and for individual specimen trees. Well managed woodland plantations could also produce a good income for a land-owner, up to twice the value of land on which they stood, and they were not labour intensive apart from the initial planting, much of which was done by nursery labourers.⁸⁵ Local nurseries offered ‘cheap planting’, or ‘planting by the Acre, on the most reasonable terms’,⁸⁶ this was not always the case with more distant nurseries which meant that labour had to be found and supervised for planting.⁸⁷ This ensured loyalty to local companies when the price was right.

Many Devon nurserymen offered a contract planting service whereby not only the plants were supplied but also the gardeners to do the planting. Samuel Freeman of Yeo near Bovey Tracey advertised 'Planting done by contract; All dead plants being replaced at the Contractor's Expense'.⁸⁸ Plants were frequently sold on a 75 per cent/25 per cent basis. That is, three quarters of the money would be paid following the initial planting. The last quarter was withheld for two years.⁸⁹ This was encouragement for nurserymen to replace plants that did not survive being transplanted from the nursery. An alternative method used by Scottish nurseries was to have a 'long thousand' where 1200 trees were supplied for every thousand ordered. This enabled an estate to plant the surplus in nursery beds for replacements where necessary.⁹⁰

John Pontey of Plymouth planted 15½ acres of rough wasteland for Captain John Hawkins as an experiment, as other crops had failed on the land. From the autumn of 1818 to the spring of 1819, he and his labourers planted a total of 38,207 trees which averaged about twenty inches (50cm) in height, at a cost of £3 per 1,000 trees. Scotch firs were planted as a shelter belt to protect the plantation from west and south-west winds. Five years later the results of the experiment were published in *The Technical Repository*, together with a certificate from Pontey to confirm how the planting was achieved. The certificate dated Plymouth May 18 1822 read:

I, John Pontey, of Plymouth, do hereby certify, that I, with my servants under my direction, have planted, on Captain John Hawkins's estate, called Flear, in the parish of East Allington, near Kingsbridge, in the county of Devon, between the first day of October 1818, and the first day of April 1819, 4,235 young oaks, 3,260 elms, 2,400 ash, 1,185 beech, 700 sycamores, 330 sweet-chestnut, 12 horse-chestnut, 160 walnut, 50 poplars, 40 limes, 20 planes, 17 birch, 30 pineasters, 70 silver firs, 40 Balm-of-Gilead firs, 130 spruce firs, 5 black-spruce firs, 10 Norway firs, 40 black American firs, 5 Weymouth pine firs, 30 of sorts firs, 23 deciduous seedlings of sorts, 12,850 larch, and 12,500 Scotch firs; ...four acres were cleared of the furze immediately previous to planting the young trees, by digging the furze up with mattocks, and thoroughly cleansing the land; and the remaining six acres were planted, by digging holes for the young trees among the furze-roots; the growing furze being previously cut off close to the ground with a hook, without any other preparation of the land whatever.⁹¹

The experiment proved that the most successful growth was where the land had had little preparation, with the trees being planted in competition with the furze. This opened the way for other areas of wasteland to be brought into cultivation without having to spend time and money on clearing the land first.

When planting 8,800 forest trees for W. R. Ilbert in 1831, Pontey charged 50s (£2.10s) per 1,000, presumably because the land was easier to plant.⁹² The firm of James Veitch also acted as contract gardeners advising on work needed on plantations and undertaking the work involved, such as mowing, weeding and mulching. For example they employed six gardeners to maintain the Arboretum at Bickton for many years.⁹³ During the winter Thomas Nicholl's men were frequently away from the nursery undertaking planting jobs. They stayed on site until the job had been completed; in January 1846 'Thomas Vickers and Party' spent eight days planting at Nansloe.⁹⁴

The demand for fruit trees did not abate in Devon, where orchards were an important part of the economy. William Marshall in 1805 maintained that:

There has been a long history in Devon of provision of trees for orchards raised either by nurserymen or by farmers for their own and their neighbours use or by cottagers for sale or by landlords to supply their tenants.⁹⁵

He was impressed with these nurseries saying, 'The management of nursery grounds, here, is above par'.⁹⁶ Provision of apple trees for orchards continued as demonstrated by estate records which detail payments to a variety of small growers. At Kitley in 1819, a William Andrews was paid for '17 Apple Trees at 3s 6d per tree'; Richard Barner sold '42 plantable apple trees' to Bowringsleigh in 1834 and Thomas Whiteway supplied apple trees to Blackpool in south Devon from at least 1868 to 1888.⁹⁷ Many nurseries including Veitch in Exeter and Rendle in Plymouth also stocked fruit trees for kitchen gardens and, in quantity, for orchards.⁹⁸

The trend for creating and maintaining plantations also continued into the nineteenth century. At Cadhay in 1810, John Veitch was paid £51.2s for 19,800 nursery trees, a further 79,750 trees had been purchased from Peck and Allan of London,⁹⁹ 'seeds of fir, larch and beech' had to be ordered from nursery men in London 'because Exeter Nursery men do not sell seed'.¹⁰⁰ Presumably all tree seeds were kept to be planted by the nurserymen themselves. The Ilberts at Bowringsleigh purchased trees by the thousand, as did the Lopes family at Maristow who paid Veitch £315 for supply and planting trees.¹⁰¹

By the middle of the nineteenth century the urban population for the first time exceeded that of rural areas. People had moved from the land to live in towns which were the hub of industrial activity and service industries. Houses were built for 'clerks, small shop-

keepers, milliners and widows'.¹⁰² In Exeter, 'nearly 4,000 new houses were built in and immediately around the city in a space of forty years'.¹⁰³ This expansion both aided and hindered the growth of nurseries. While providing customers and work, many nurseries were forced off their land in order to make way for housing, roads and railways. This was especially true in Exeter St David's where the population had risen from 1,853 to 3,078 in thirty years to 1831 and from 2,707 to 6,602 at St Sidwell over the same period.¹⁰⁴ The first threat to William Ford's land came in 1824 when his advertisement stated:

in consequence of a certain portion of his extensive plantations about to be appropriated to Building purposes; he is determined to dispose of the stock thereon, on terms very considerably lower than the usual prices.¹⁰⁵

The constant threat of land disappearing under building must have made for stressful management. By 1826 Ford's stock was for sale due to bankruptcy.¹⁰⁶ He died four years later. In 1831 more of what had been Ford's land was 'wanted for building purposes'.¹⁰⁷ The demand for building land continued into the 1880s and affected other nurseries such as Bustard and Sons who had to give up their nursery in Polsloe Road, 'the land having been sold for building'.¹⁰⁸ If a nurseryman owned the property then there was money to be made and capital to be ploughed back into the business but if it was leased, urban expansion could see the demise of all or part of the business.

Exeter, despite the decline in the woollen trade, was a wealthy city and provided a ready and growing market for nurserymen. It was also a good distribution point, plants being shipped into and out of Topsham by ship, by road via carriers such as Russell's and, from 1844, by rail. A list of carriers based in the city in 1844 showed eighty places were served by ninety-five carriers (excluding long-distance services to destinations such as London, Bristol, Falmouth).¹⁰⁹ Exeter was a major market city with several large fairs each year where people met to sell and buy produce. It was a meeting place for entertainment, or for gentlemen to attend the courts, and cultural and scientific meetings. Horticultural societies and exhibitions were based in the city which displayed new plants on offer, 'thus offering to purchasers an opportunity of judging for themselves instead of relying upon highly-coloured portraits, or highly-coloured advertisements'.¹¹⁰ The nurseries that survived urban expansion the longest were on the outskirts of the city at St Thomas and Heavitree but, eventually, in 1895 Samuel Britton, the manager of Belle Vue Nurseries, St Thomas, advertised the disposal of their stock as the land was to be built upon.¹¹¹

Plymouth too was a good venue for a nursery. With shipping links to London, and Falmouth, nurserymen had markets in several counties.¹¹² Ships called into Plymouth bringing seeds and plants from abroad and naval ambassadors were frequently a source of new plant varieties. Dr. Hamilton, an amateur botanist, supplied plants to Pontey's for experimentation, many sent from South America by the British Consul, others from correspondents such as Dr. William Schiede.¹¹³ These included the arracacha root which was considered 'superior to the potato'¹¹⁴ and:

The Pita plant, of which the only specimens in Europe, of whose existence I am aware, are those in the possession of Mr. Pontey here, and one which he exchanged with Mr. Lambert, of Boyton House, Wilts.¹¹⁵

Results of the experiments were eagerly looked for at horticultural shows, and reported in local newspapers and national journals, for example, samples of ropes made from the pita plant were compared for strength with those made from hemp.¹¹⁶ Reporting on the South Devon and East Cornwall Botanical and Horticultural Society Exhibition held on May 27th 1830, the journalist stated:

The magnificence of the exhibition was greatly increased by contributions for that special purpose, without any pretensions to prizes ... The Opium manufactured by Mr. Cox of his Majesty's dock-yard, from the large white poppy from Mr. Pontey's was declared by several medical gentlemen as superior to that generally imported.¹¹⁷

A fascination with new exotic plants, the proximity of ports, together with sufficient wealth to back new ventures, saw Devon nurseries send out plant hunters who travelled all over the world to procure new varieties of plants. These were tried and tested in glasshouses and gardens throughout the region, taking advantage of the mild west-country climate. The Wardian case, an invention of Dr Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward, enabled exotic species of plants to survive transportation from their homeland to Britain, in a sealed glass container, despite the temperature and humidity outside. George Loddiges, a nurseryman from London, was one of the first to use the case, claiming that whereas he used to lose nineteen out of twenty plants on a long voyage, by the use of the Wardian case nineteen out of twenty plants now survived.

Exeter Nurserymen

The earliest nurseryman in Devon is usually thought to be William Lucombe who established his nursery in Exeter St Thomas in 1720.¹¹⁸ Lucombe had been a gardener at

Mamhead where he had planted many trees on the estate of Mr. Balle.¹¹⁹ The firm he created was best known in the eighteenth century for the introduction of the Lucombe Oak, *Quercus X hispanica* 'Lucombeana' a quick growing evergreen tree with a straight trunk, a hybrid of a turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) and a Cork Oak (*Quercus suber*) which he discovered in about 1763. Lucombe dispatched the oaks all around Britain including the north of England, Wales and Ireland to see if they would 'do'. They were advertised in the 1775 catalogue of Telford of York as the Devonshire or Lucombe Oak.¹²⁰ This was part of the opening up of the nursery trade which took it from a London led or regional based industry to become a national business putting Exeter and Devon firmly on the map in terms of innovation and specialisation. During the early 1800s Lucombe's had also produced notable apples, 'Lucombe's Pine' and 'Lucombe's Seedling'.

By 1813, the firm of William Lucombe had become Lucombe and Pince as William's grandsons, John Lucombe and Benjamin Pince, now ran the business. They advertised 'A great quantity of very fine large scotch firs from 3 to 5 feet which will be sold very cheap, for their size, and well worth the attention of gentlemen'. They also offered 'some very large rhododendrons that would be highly ornamental for fronting large shrubberies or planting, as fencing underwood to large plantations'. The same advertisement included 'new' plants such as the 'fern leav'd beech', 'Antwerp Raspberry' and a 'very large prolific Hautboy Strawberry'.¹²¹ In other words, while they appealed to land-owners for business, they also advised what to plant in both plantations and shrubbery and, at the same time, ensured that kitchen gardeners and owners were acquainted with the latest varieties of fruit.

Annual horticultural exhibitions acted as showcases for new and better plant varieties being developed by nurseries. From its beginnings there were three nurseries closely associated with the Devon and Exeter Horticultural and Botanical Society. These were Veitch, initially of Killerton, later from Killerton and Mount Radford Nurseries in Exeter, George Dymond and Co., and Lucombe and Pince. By 1832 Sclater was also exhibiting and in 1834 Dymond was replaced by Nott & Hewett who had taken over the firm.¹²² There was some conflict between the members and their aims. Robert Pince, one of the founder members, thought there should be more practical men on the committee, so three local nurserymen were voted on as members but, only a few years later, the Reverend Dr. Mills complained that there were too many nurserymen involved with the society, as 'in its origins and objects this was a gentleman's society'.¹²³

Reports of horticultural exhibitions were normally published once a year in the *Gardener's Magazine*. However, Loudon had been sufficiently impressed by how Lucombe and Pince had arranged their plants at the Devon Horticultural Society exhibition in June of 1835, to include an additional report which described plants that were:

...classed in masses of distinct kinds, which were again subdivided according to their various contrasted hues: the advantages of the application of scientific principle, and of system, were here apparent, great judgement being exercised in the regulation of light and shade; while the effect of the whole was of the most picturesque and agreeable kind, and well worthy of imitation.¹²⁴

In 1841 Lucombe and Pince introduced the first English tea rose, which was raised in Devonport, *Rosa 'Devoniensis'*.¹²⁵ A somewhat inflated and inaccurate account was published in *The Magazine of Horticulture*:

It was raised from the seed by a cottager in Devonshire England: Mr Pince of Lucombe & Pince of Exeter Nurseries happened to see the rose in passing and was so much struck with its charms that he inticed the cottager to part with it for ten guineas; after he had propagated it, he took it to London and sold in one day one hundred bushes, for one hundred and ten pounds. The Duke of Devonshire bought five at a guinea each.¹²⁶

Lucombe and Pince were responsible for raising some of the earliest plants from abroad, introducing material from Nepal and Central and South America. The company published the 'fullest catalogue of Coniferae which has yet been published... in all, 151 species and varieties'.¹²⁷

Loudon enthusiastically promoted the cast iron and lead tree labels designed by Robert Glendinning while working at Lucombe and Pince and used to identify trees from their nursery. He hoped they would be 'adopted by all nurserymen'.

The names are stamped on a plate of lead and the indentations are filled in with white paint on a black ground. A disc on the shank of the label at once prevents it from being pushed too far into the ground and from leaning either to the one side or the other. The stamping of the names on these labels might form an occupation for workmen in weather when they could not work out of doors, for persons in workhouses perhaps, and for women and children.¹²⁸

The most famous of the Exeter nurseries was that owned by the Veitch family. Some of the gardens that the Veitch nurserymen advised upon and supplied plants to included Cadhay, Chevithorne Parsonage in Tiverton, Hall in North Devon, Mamhead, Saltram, Blackpool, Craddock Lodge at Uffculme, Luscombe Castle, Colleton, Streatham Hall in

Exeter, Huntsham Court, Shute House and Stover, all in Devon; Bridehead House and Nynhead Gardens in Somerset and Pentillie in Cornwall.¹²⁹ The Veitchs and their designers worked with aristocracy, gentry, the clergy and middle class villa owners, and provided plants for many gardens in Devon.

John Veitch, head gardener and agent at Killerton, had grown trees in nursery plots on Killerton estate and supplied local landowners with surplus stock as well as William Lucombe's nursery in Exeter, prior to setting up his own nursery at Budlake in 1779.¹³⁰ Veitch had arrived in Devon from London in 1770 to lay out 500 acres of parkland for Sir Thomas Dyke Acland to conform with the new style landscape parks at Bicton, Castle Hill and Saltram.¹³¹ He was eighteen and had been working in the Vineyard Nursery for two years previously, earning 8s a week. Originally, he trained with Dickson's in Scotland near to his home at Ancrum. The death of Acland brought work on the estate to a standstill but gave Veitch the opportunity to develop his design and nursery business while continuing to act as agent to the Acland estates.¹³² One of Veitch's largest commissions was to supply trees and flowering shrubs such as camellias and myrtles to the value of £1,212, to create woodland, designed by Repton, for Charles Hoare of Luscombe Castle in Dawlish.¹³³

Veitch's first love was trees, however, his youngest son James was more interested in flowering plants and added annuals and perennials to the nursery stock. James sent specimen plants to the London Horticultural Society's shows where many, such as a double dahlia sent in 1826, received awards.

The nursery at Budlake was leased for the term of John's life only, so it was James who bought twenty-five acres of land at Mount Radford in Exeter in 1830 for £200 an acre and opened his nursery in 1832, in competition with those already in the city.¹³⁴ This was very expensive land with a capital investment of £5,000 but James was bidding against those who were attracted to the property for its building potential, moreover, it was 'within 10 minutes walk of the city'. It is possible that James bought the property that had already been a nursery which was being advertised as 'an investment for building'.¹³⁵ The Veitch family certainly understood the security of owning freehold land at a time when many nurseries existed on leases. In 1882 as part of an expansion plan, Veitch and Sons of Chelsea bought Osborn's nursery at Fulham, which comprised only four acres, for a sum of £10,000 which was also in a prime location for building.¹³⁶

The lease that John Veitch had had at Budlake illustrated how a business could be affected by the lack of a permanent lease or freehold. This put some businesses at risk when a proprietor died, although some life-time leases gave a couple of years after death to enable a business to be disposed of and moved. This happened at Bow Hill where William Lucombe had 'a leasehold Interest therein for his Life (now upwards of 90) and 2 years after his death'.¹³⁷ This was for part of Bowhill House and four nearby fields. Following his death his son John had to set about moving family and nursery onto other land. Many nursery businesses, as will be seen later, were on land with leases for seven years or less. A freehold or long leasehold ensured long-term planning for the business but also, should anything go wrong, the land itself was an asset.

When James Veitch moved to Exeter there were already a dozen nurseries based in the town. These included his greatest rival Lucombe and Pince. There were also nurseries owned by the Southwood, Addiscott, Dymond and Sclater families; Charles Hewett, Thomas Charmes, William Cox, James Turner, James Townsend and William Ford were also competitors. His new seed shop which opened at 54 High Street to sell 'seeds, garden implements and sundries' also had to compete with established businesses.¹³⁸ Buildings on the site at Mount Radford included five stove houses for orchids which were to become one of the specialities of the business. Other land was soon purchased or leased, including eleven acres on Haldon for ornamental trees and shrubs, and seven acres of enclosed Broadclyst Heath, which was named Brockhill, where the tree stock was kept. John Veitch remained at Budlake with son Thomas until his death in 1839 aged 87.¹³⁹

In 1853, after the purchase of Knight and Perry's Exotic Nursery, James Junior, grandson of John Veitch, went to London to manage the Chelsea nursery. James senior remained in Exeter with his younger son Robert Toswill Veitch. Both nurseries were managed as one business until James senior died in 1863. After that they became separate organisations run by brothers James and Robert. The Exeter nurseries expanded under Robert, with new premises opened in New North Road, Exeter and in Exminster. Robert was eventually joined by his son Peter and the firm then continued as Robert Veitch and Son.¹⁴⁰

Veitch and Son were particularly known for their plant collecting. Thomas Lobb had started work at the Budlake nursery as a boy and moved to the new Exeter nursery when it opened. His older brother William, continued to work for the Williams family at

Scorrier in Cornwall. However, in 1840 William was persuaded to travel to South America to explore Brazil, Chile, Peru, Ecuador and Columbia on behalf of Veitch. In 1842 Thomas Lobb was also sent abroad to Malaysia and Indonesia but after 1853 sent most of his plant finds to Veitch's in Chelsea.¹⁴¹ Both brothers continued to collect for the Veitch family until William Lobb died in San Francisco in 1864.

Another local collector for Veitch was Richard Pearce. He joined James Veitch in Exeter in 1858 having first worked with Pontey in Plymouth. By 1859, trained by Thomas Lobb, he had been sent to Chile. He also collected extensively for James Veitch in London but, after a disagreement with Veitch, moved to Bull and Son shortly before his untimely death in 1868 aged 32.¹⁴²

Other Devon Nurserymen

As observed with Lucombe and Veitch, many Exeter nurseries were long-lived. John Wilson's nursery (1770-1778) at Okehampton Street in Exeter St Thomas was taken over by William Ford junior and John Bolham. It is not known what happened to Bolham but by 1805 Ford was trading with Thomas Please as Ford and Please. By 1816 George Dymond & Co had taken on the business. They ran the nursery stocked with forest trees, ornamental shrubs and plants, for twenty-one years, probably the length of their lease. From their seed shop they sold imported bulbs from Holland.¹⁴³ In 1835, the nursery business was sold to Nott and Hewett, who also had land at Sidmouth,¹⁴⁴ and when, in 1836, John Dymond junior took over the management of the Devon and Cornwall Banking Company, the seed business at New Bridge Street was sold to William Kerswell Mogridge (1801-1874), a former manager of Dymond's. The latter was still in business in 1851 but retired in 1861.¹⁴⁵

Many nurseries were, in common with James Veitch, set up or expanded in the 1830s. The Sclater family had been gardeners for at least thirty years by then. James, John and William, all gardeners, were volunteers in the Exeter Regiment and appear in the Exeter Militia List of 1803.¹⁴⁶ Various members of the Sclater family became nurserymen. One of the best known in the early nineteenth century was Charles Sclater, born in 1796 he is listed as a nurseryman in the *Exeter Pocket Journal* of 1819. In 1824 he made a buying trip to Bath, Bristol and London and on his return advertised curious and rare specimens of geraniums, pinks and carnations on view at his nursery in Southernhay.¹⁴⁷ Four years later he took a seven year lease on two gardens from the Guardians of the Poor, which

had originally been part of the workhouse garden, with the intention of ‘opening, in a very superior style, these grounds to the public’.¹⁴⁸ The gardens comprised a total of four and a half acres altogether and became known as the Summerland Nursery. Sclater was unhappy with the competition from other nurserymen (especially Veitch) and applied for a reduction in rent in 1834 owing to ‘the great competition that, since he entered on these premises, has sprung up in this neighbourhood in his line of business’. It appears from his lease that he did not get the rebate that he requested but despite being made bankrupt in 1848 remained at the Summerland Nursery until 1870.¹⁴⁹

In his ‘Report on rare or select Articles in certain British Nurseries and private Gardens’ Loudon included three nurseries from Devon. These were Lucombe and Pince, James Veitch and the Summerland Nursery, of which he wrote:

The grounds are of considerable extent and remarkably well, as it appeared to us, furnished with fruit trees. Mr. Sclater, jun., informed us that they have a very extensive collection of hardy fruits, with specimen plants of each kind bordering the walks. They have a new kind of grape from America, producing a very fine fruit with peculiarly agreeable flavour, and a most powerful perfume. They have some superb kinds of raspberries and a great many articles from America, received through the kindness of Major Knox of Lindridge.

He then went on to list the rare plants found in the nursery among which there was, ‘a potato which may be said to produce two crops a year, as, when the first-formed tubers are taken away early in summer, a second set is produced late in autumn,’ and ‘the Paignton cabbage’.¹⁵⁰ The fact that Loudon included Sclater’s nursery suggests that it was one of the most important in Exeter at the time.

James and Edward Sclater, sons of Charles, also had nurseries in Exeter. Edward at the South Devon Nursery in Exeter St Thomas had eleven acres and employed four men and three boys including two of his sons.¹⁵¹ James Sclater had a total of 96 acres which included land at St Loyes leased from the Trustees of Heavitree Charity. He claimed in 1852 to have ‘upwards of £2,000 worth of property in this neighbourhood’.¹⁵² His son Charles took over these lands in 1866 but the nursery continued to be known as James Sclater & Co. During the agricultural recession and bad harvests of the 1870s Charles Sclater struggled to survive and in 1879 wrote to the Trustees asking for a reduction in rent ‘especially as your land is so very dearly rented’.¹⁵³ It was William Henry Sclater of the Alexandra and Summerland Nurseries, another son of Charles, who took over

part of Lucombe and Pince's Nursery in St Thomas in 1897, which was sold in 1912 to Exeter City Council to become a public park known as Pince's Gardens.¹⁵⁴

Plymouth Nurseries

It is surprising that the nurserymen of Plymouth did not become as well known as those of Exeter. William Edgcumbe Rendle was the son of John Rendle, grandson of William, both nurserymen. He wrote a *Treatise on the Tank System of communicating Heat to Horticultural Structures* (1843) which explained how a tank six inches deep, twenty feet long by five feet wide could be used to heat houses for propagation of plants, the plants being grown on top of the tank.¹⁵⁵ He was also responsible for the Plymouth Royal Botanic Gardens which attracted 'upwards of 6,000 people of the highest respectability,' including the Nepalese Ambassador, at its opening in 1850.¹⁵⁶ The Botanic Gardens were opened with money he received for the loss of about two acres of nursery land needed for the South Devon Railway.¹⁵⁷ The Botanical Gardens were intended:

For the meetings of the archery society, horticultural and floricultural exhibitions (Plymouth hitherto having been deficient in this respect) fancy bazaars, *soirees*, exhibitions of fireworks, and a subscription promenade for the summer months.¹⁵⁸

Having given up his land in 1848, Rendle managed to lease from the railway company:

All those pieces or parcels of Ground lying on the Western side of the South Devon Railway and including the slope of the Railway Embankment between Union Street and King Street... to lay out the said pieces or parcels of Ground as an Ornamental Garden or pleasure Ground and to form Walks and plant trees and Shrubs therein and generally to occupy the same together with and as part of the Public Gardens laid out by the said William Edgcumbe Rendle on the Northern side of Union Street and King Street.

The lease was for a period of 21 years at a nominal rent of £5 payable half yearly.¹⁵⁹ Rendle therefore had a further source of income and advertisement in addition to the nursery as well as a ready-made showcase for his plants. The entrance was through trellised arches and 'statues of chaste design', the garden contained 'beautiful trees and plants from all nations...two handsome fountains' and 'conservatories filled with rare Exotic Plants'.¹⁶⁰ Not surprisingly William Rendle became wealthy enough to employ a governess, four servants and a groom and to retire at an early age.¹⁶¹

Loudon visited Rendle's nursery in 1842 and included it in a *Gardener's Magazine* report, however, the description was short compared to that for Pontey's nursery, possibly as a result of Rendle's absence when he called:

This [Rendle's nursery] also contains a very long straight walk with many fine specimens ranged on each side, together with rockwork, basins of water, aquatics, and a number of houses filled with greenhouse plants, Cáci, heaths, Orchidàceæ, bulbs, new tropæolums, rare pelargoniums, and various other articles; the whole in excellent order.¹⁶²

The firm of Pontey in Plymouth was established by William Pontey at the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century. Certainly there was a William Pontey in Frankfort Street in 1812.¹⁶³ What is equally certain is that they were related to the Ponteys of Yorkshire. Both Alexander Pontey and his nephew Edward, his book-keeper and clerk, were born at Kirk Heaton, Yorkshire. Edward was the son of William Pontey in Kirk Heaton, nurseryman. They were probably related to the William Pontey c1780-1831, who was famous for his treatises on trees, and who styled himself as a Nurseryman and Ornamental Gardener and Planter to the Late and Present Duke of Bedford.¹⁶⁴

John Pontey had two nurseries, one at Cornwall Street, the other at Vinstone, just outside Plymouth. The business initially specialised in forest trees. Alexander Pontey joined John in about 1814 and worked alongside him. They supplied plants and trees to the Bastard, Treby, Strode and Ilbert families, and regularly supplied Saltram with every garden requisite from vegetable seeds to a variety of trees.¹⁶⁵ In 1834 John Pontey assigned his whole business to Alexander. This included 'considerable property' consisting of gardens, fields and nursery grounds at Plymouth and Compton:

...with the Hothouses Greenhouses Warehouses stable shed and buildings thereon and of Frames Tools and Implements Horses and carts with their Tackle and Furniture and of Plants Shrubs and Crops Seeds and other stock in Trade and household goods and furniture and shop fixtures.

There were also shares in the South Devon United Shipping Company and the Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway Company. All was deeded to Alexander except John's 'writing desk printed books apparel and ready money'. In return John Pontey was to receive an annuity of one hundred pounds per year to be paid to him during his life.¹⁶⁶ Alexander took over control of the nurseries in October 1834. A few days before the assignment

deed was drawn up he had married a widow, Mary Lyne Snell née Rowe.¹⁶⁷ John Pontey continued to live with Alexander and his wife until his death in 1854.

As merchantmen, often with managers to run their businesses, nurserymen became involved in related industries. They were men of capital who invested in land and property, for example Robert Pince, in addition to his nursery business was also proprietor of Lucombe's Horticultural Buildings.¹⁶⁸ By 1842 Alexander Pontey had, like William Rendle, expanded his business. He partnered his brother-in-law to run the Pontey, Rowe & Co., Bone Manure Manufactory in Plymouth. Loudon was fascinated by the factory and wrote:

The machinery, which is impelled by water, is very powerful, and the quantity of bone-dust produced in an hour is so great, that we cannot venture to put it down. The greater part of the bones are imported, and among them are human bones. Before the bones are put in the machine, they are each separately examined by women; for, the price being high, the foreigners find it worth their while to adulterate them by inserting nails and other pieces of old iron in the hollows and crevices, and when bones having these scraps of iron in them get into the mill, the injury they do to the cylinders is very great indeed. There is a heap of old iron weighing several tons, the whole of which has been extracted from the bones by the women. When in Bavaria in 1828, we saw immense quantities of human bones in the charnel houses, the skulls having them names which they bore when alive written on their fronts, and being arranged on shelves, and the other bones lying in heaps on the floor. We do not suppose these skulls have been removed; but it is most probable that the other bones are now manuring the turnip fields of England.¹⁶⁹

The business, to which customers were invited to watch the manure making process, continued until the company was dissolved in 1860.¹⁷⁰

When Alexander suddenly died in 1862 he left everything to his widow. An attempt was made to sell the business which included the leases on the nurseries at Plymouth and Vinstone, the business premises and stores 'which are most conveniently situate near the market', as well as the 'plant, which is of the most modern construction'. It appears that the business did not sell as Mary Lyne Pontey continued to run the business for a further nine years before it was purchased by Robert Serpell.

Functions of Nurseries

The purpose of a nursery was first and foremost the provision of plants but it also fulfilled many other functions. Nurseries sold ideas, dreams and status as well as plants.

Perkin maintained 'Professions live by persuasion and propaganda, their services indispensable to the client, employer, society or state'.¹⁷¹ Through their advertisements and their catalogues, nurserymen encouraged garden owners to display their wealth and education, collectors to obtain the rarest plants, the middle class to emulate the gentry and aristocracy, and offered a showcase for plants for all to see. Inventions such as a small version of the Wardian case which could be used for indoor fern gardens, or to protect plants from the fumes of gas lights and coal fires, enabled those who could not afford, or did not have the room for, a conservatory of their own, to have an indoor 'glasshouse'. This helped the increase of sales to the middle class.

Plants were purchased by landowners, from a variety of nurseries, not all of them in Devon. For example a garden such as Pentillie, one of the top gardens on the borders of Cornwall and Devon, bought from widely differing places including Veitch of Chelsea and Williams in London; from Pontey and Theodore Cuerel in Plymouth and from Truro the Treseders and Nichols.¹⁷² The Duke of Bedford's agent at Endsleigh bought tulips, crocus, roses, violets and heaths from Pontey at Plymouth, hedging plants from Rendle in Plymouth, and annuals from Lucombe and Pince in Exeter.¹⁷³

John Harvey collected 320 nursery and seedsmen's catalogues which dated from 1677 to 1850 but complained of 'the extreme rarity of catalogues and especially of those marking prices'.¹⁷⁴ In 1857 the editor of *The Floricultural Cabinet* bemoaned the fact that many catalogues were being lost having been thrown away 'after serving a temporary purpose'.¹⁷⁵ Later catalogues were intended to be kept. Messrs Fraser & Co of Queen Street, Exeter, seed merchants, 'have made an attractive annual of their descriptive trade catalogue enclosed in an ornamental wrapper'.¹⁷⁶

Although many nursery and seedsmen produced catalogues to advertise their plants and seeds, some were little more than lists of plants available and few have been found for Devon nurserymen.¹⁷⁷ James Sclater produced a hand-bill in about 1865 of 'The Newest and Best Fruits of the Season' (see Figure 6:5). Aimed at 'all first-class Growers, and particularly to Market Gardeners', it was a practical document and had no need to be colourful or attractive. The list detailed plants on offer. Strawberries were sold by the hundred; raspberries, currants, and gooseberries by the dozen; filbert, quince, medlars, pears and apples were priced individually from 1s each to 5s each. At the bottom of the single sheet of paper Sclater advertised 'Catalogues and Prices sent on application'.¹⁷⁸

This was a common phrase used by nurserymen. Catalogues, although 'free by post, on application', were not sent out to all and sundry in the hope of sales.¹⁷⁹

Figure 6:5. Handbill of James Sclater of Heavitree

THE NEWEST AND BEST FRUITS OF THE SEASON.

Messrs. JAMES SCLATER & Co., Devon Nurseries, Heavitree, near Exeter, as the Largest Fruit Growers in the West, can with confidence recommend these. New and Superb Fruits to all first-class Growers, and particularly to Market Gardeners.

-
- STRAWBERRIES.** THE GOLDFINDER.—The earliest Strawberry grown; Fruit, large; color, brilliant scarlet; very solid; fine flavoured; great cropper; very hardy. 10s. per 100.
 THE PEARL.—The most productive known; over 200 Fruit have been gathered from one plant; Fruit, fine; crimson color, and Pine Apple flavoured. 21s. per 100.
 SIR JOSEPH PAXTON.—A new variety; highly recommended; obtained several first-class Certificates at the London Shows. 21s. per 100.
- RASPBERRY.** THE SEMPER FIDELIS.—A most distinct and wonderfully productive sort; very hardy; canes of great strength; Fruit, extra large, and of pleasing red color; the best. 60s. per 100, or 12s. per dozen.
 PRINCE OF WALES.—A fine early sort; canes very strong; Fruit, large, red, and fine flavoured. 21s. per 100, or 4s. per dozen.
- CURRANTS.** IMPROVED BLACK NAPLES.—Most productive; fruit very large; the finest Black Currant. 4s. per doz.
 WHITE TRANSPARENT.—The finest White. 4s. per dozen.
 LA HATIVE.—The earliest Red; brilliant in color and most productive. 4s. per dozen.
 BABY CASTLE.—The true sort; the finest Red Currant; Fruit, large, productive, and hardy. 4s. per dozen.
- GOOSEBERRIES.** MAY DUKE.—The finest early Red; a great cropper; recommended. 6s. per dozen.
 NAPOLEON.—A very distinct and remarkable sort; Fruit, Pear shaped; very large, and fine rough crimson Red; keeps well, and does not burst; recommended. 12s. per dozen.
 LONDON.—True sort; largest Red known. 6s. per dozen.
- FILBERT.** UNION.—A new Hybrid Nut; very large, and most productive. 1s. 6d. each.
 PURPLE LEAVED.—Like leaf of Purple Beach; useful and ornamental. 1s. each.
- QUINCE.** PEAR SHAPED.—Very productive; standards. 2s. 6d. each.
- MEDLERS.** THE STONELESS.—Hardy and ornamental; very great bearer; standards. 8s. 6d. each.
- PEARS.** THE BRITISH QUEEN.—A new Pear; highly recommended. Raised at the Royal Gardens, Windsor. 5s. each.
 GENERAL TODTLEPEN.—A large late Melting Pear from Belgium; a first-class Fruit in December and February. 2s. 6d. each.
 MARCHAL DE LA COUR.—A large Melting and Juicy Pear, from Belgium; bearing in clusters; a fine November Pear; recommended. 1s. 6d. each.
- APPLES.** LORD SUFFIELD.—The finest Kitchen Apple known; certain cropper; Fruit large; skin a pale yellow, with bluish on sunny side. 1s. 6d. each.
 EMPEROR NAPOLEON.—New; the finest Summer Apple in cultivation; Fruit, large and productive; skin scarlet crimson, with fine bloom. The best Summer Table Apple. 2s. 6d. each.
 COX'S ORANGE PIPPIN.—A splendid Dessert Apple; a great bearer. 1s. 6d. each.
-

J. SCLATER & CO. have the largest Assortment of all the Newest and Best Fruits; also a fine Stock of Ornamental and Forest Trees. Catalogues and Prices sent on application.

Source: DRO 3004A/PFA 215.

A large company such as James Veitch & Co would have had several comprehensive catalogues and price lists. Their catalogue of *Select Stove Plants, Aquatics, Greenhouse Plants, Camellias, Azalea Indica, and Ericas* (1853-4), was eighteen pages long, although still little more than lists of plants with prices. They had separate lists for other categories of plants and trees: *Hortus Veitchii*, ostensibly a history of the company, was in reality little more than a catalogue of some of their more important introductions.

Nurserymen educated the public about gardening methods through their catalogues and books, although, being salesmen, not all catalogues were totally accurate. Jane Loudon cautioned her readers that:

Nurserymen put down a great many more names in their catalogues than they have different kinds of plants: and thus the same plants like the actors in a country theatre, are often made to perform under a great many different names in the same piece.¹⁸⁰

Many nurserymen were influential in stressing the importance of manures and bringing new equipment to the notice of their customers, some of which they had designed themselves. They also lectured at horticultural shows, and gave prizes to encourage wider participation in horticulture. Frequently catalogues were not just lists of plants but gave instructions on how to plant and care for new acquisitions, a gardening calendar was often included. It is not known how many catalogues were ordered at any one time or what the distribution was expected to be for any Devon nurseries but Thomas Nicholl of Truro ordered 200 catalogues to be printed in September 1842. He supplied over forty major gardens in Cornwall with plants as well as Powderham and Endsleigh in Devon.¹⁸¹

Technical innovation also aided the growth of nurseries in the same way that it had helped private gardeners. Improvements in the way that glasshouses were built, together with new heating and ventilating systems encouraged propagation of half-hardy and tender exotics. Nursery proprietors developed and advertised new products such as insecticides and manures and frequently acted as agents for specific products such as 'Lawe's Patent Super Phosphate'.¹⁸²

In addition to plants, nurseries also sold essential garden tools such as pruning knives, and new equipment as it became available, including lawnmowers, garden rollers, mats to protect plants from bad weather, flower pots, pesticides, and fertilisers. This part of the business grew more extensive as more equipment, tools, chemicals and cure-alls came onto the market.¹⁸³

Nurserymen acted as middle men in several ways. In the same way that a head gardener was placed in a responsible position between an owner and the rest of the garden staff, nurserymen were placed between a variety of industries and their customers. They acquired plants and seeds from specialist growers, often importing from nurseries

abroad, to sell to their customers. Joseph Knight of the Exotic Nursery, Chelsea, travelled to France and Holland to purchase plants, he also bought from William Baxter who collected in Australia and imported plants from Brazil and China.¹⁸⁴ Veitch and Lucombe imported seeds and plants either through agents or by sending out their own plant-hunters. They were frequently agents for the sale of insurance, which included the Nurserymen, Market Gardener's and General Hailstorm Insurance Corporation Limited.¹⁸⁵ As discussed in Chapter Two they also acted as employment agencies for professional gardeners seeking work.¹⁸⁶ The advantage to the gardeners was that a recommendation from a top nursery such as Lucombe, Pontey or Veitch counted for something when they were job-hunting but not all gardeners were happy with the pay they received while waiting for a position to be found, claiming they were paid less than the permanent nursery staff.¹⁸⁷ Good relationships with head gardeners ensured a ready made loyal customer base and a place where trials could be held in local gardens. Nicholls at Redruth entertained head gardeners and their wives from many Cornish gardens as well as from Endsleigh in Devon.¹⁸⁸

Local, regional and national horticultural shows and exhibitions led to competition between nurserymen, which in turn led to improvement of the quality of plants. This might be production of tastier fruit and vegetables, disease resistant varieties or hardier versions of imported exotics. The quality of plants was important, new plants were expensive, flowering shrubs were comparatively cheap at 3d or 6d each but exotics and some bulbs could cost several guineas for each plant.¹⁸⁹ However, there were still complaints that plants were lost because the 'roots were all rotted':

We have, in fact, to recollect that nurserymen and florists strive to grow plants as rapidly as they can for the sake of getting them to a saleable size: and probably a greenhouse plant, in some hands, hardly ever receives greenhouse treatment.¹⁹⁰

Plants therefore needed to be good quality and hardy, or customers would not return. Prizes awarded ensured that competition was always fierce. This also led to specialisation of particular nurseries or nursery departments, who concentrated their energies on one species of plant such as roses, fuchsias or dahlias. Some exhibitions led to problems for the exhibitors, for example at the Royal Devon and Cornwall Botanical and Horticultural Society Show on May 22nd 1834, 'some of the finest pelargoniums were almost completely ruined by the number of cuttings purloined by some of the visitors to the show'.¹⁹¹

Nurserymen grew their produce for commercial reasons; to make money. They would therefore use the latest methods. In their gardens would be found hot-beds, frames, glasses and glasshouses. The ‘nurseryman’s stock’ which was auctioned on the bankruptcy of James Searle, proprietor of Searle’s Street Gardens, included:

3 box frames 100 foot long with 23 lights ea. 700 12” [inch] Empty Potts, 100 8” do. [ditto]; 1,000 5” do.; 1,000 6” do.; 1,000 pots of Various sizes, packing Boxes, Syringe, 2 Watering Pots, Matting, Wheelbarrow, Ladder, 200 yds. of Canvas, garden Tools, Stoking Tools, Stakes, Twine, Scales and Weights, Desk, Table, Boxes, Barrels, Leaf Mould, Thermometer, Steps &c.¹⁹²

The short list of equipment above implies a very small establishment run by a manager on behalf of Searle.

Searle was also proprietor of Addiscott’s in Exeter St Thomas. This had been a much more extensive business, having been established prior to 1816 when Chown and Addiscott took over from William Morton on his death.¹⁹³ The nursery was run by William Addiscott and his son Henry. When Henry died in 1875 the business was not run by his sons who had already left Exeter. When the contents of this nursery was sold there were 477 lots which covered everything from the plant stock, tools and equipment, boilers and pipes, even the contents of the office. The latter included a mahogany desk, a counter with a mahogany top, a letter press, a stool and desk, a nest of drawers and the final item, an ‘8 day clock’, all of which give a poignant view of the inside workings of a nursery that had lasted for about eighty years.¹⁹⁴

Tasks of Nursery Workers.

Loudon, naturally, detailed the tasks that he expected a nursery proprietor to undertake. These began with the ‘correctness in the names given to plants and seeds’ and included production of a catalogue, careful packing and prompt dispatch of goods, paying sufficient wages ‘as may not tempt [workmen] either to idleness or pilfering themselves, or to countenance these practices in others’, and ending with the importance of frugality and neatness.¹⁹⁵

There are few records, however, of the work undertaken by the workers in the nursery gardens but it would have been similar to garden and plantation work on an estate with more emphasis on growing plants for production. Below (Figure 6:6) is a list of tasks

undertaken at the nursery at Buckland Abbey at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The amount of weeding done demonstrates the importance of keeping the ground clean. Marshall had commented on how the ground was ‘commonly covered with straw, weeds, brambles, or other vegetable matters, to check the rising weed, and to assist in keeping the ground mellow and moist; as well as to meliorate the soil’.¹⁹⁶

Figure 6:6. Work done at Buckland Abbey nursery 1800 to 1803

Date	Task
December 12 1800	Hacking over the nursery
April 281800	Taking off superflues [sic] Branches of grafted apple trees. Pruning. Staking trees.
December 1801	Planting acorns. Taking apple trees out of the nursery
June 25, July 6, September 30 1802	Weeding in the nursery
November 19 1802	Planting gribels* in the nursery
November 30 1802	Assisting planting Ceydars [sic]of Lebanon
December 8 1802	Taking up Larches &c.
December 11 1802	Staking Cedars
December 13 1802	Packing shrubs
December 14 1802	Putting in Quick by the heels & Tending water
December 15 1802	Staking Trees and putting in jars for catching mice.
February 161803	Transplanting laurels and putting in laurel cuttings
February 19 1803	Sorting Thorn plants
March 3 1803	Spreading Compost
March 26 1803	Planting Larch in Nursery
May 41803	Weeding
July 23 1803	Saml. Mellish for 33 days work weeding nurseries

* young apple trees raised from seed or the stock on which they are grafted.

Source: DRO 346M E9-E10.

Trees were frequently transplanted from one plot to another, this was thought to strengthen them and also made them easier to take up when sold as they had not had time to put down extensive roots.

Many of the ornamental trees are transplanted every second year till they attain the height of 10 or 12 feet, at which they produce an immediate effect when planted out in pleasure-grounds.¹⁹⁷

Eventually machines were invented which helped this process. When Lucombe and Pince sold their nursery trees at the Hillside nursery in Exminster, ‘the land being too far from home for convenient use as a nursery’, the auctioneers advertised that ‘the proprietors will place their transplanting machine at the disposal of the purchasers and will remove at mere cost of labour and packing when required’.¹⁹⁸

Thomas Nicholl did not include many details of the work that was done on his nursery but the few tasks he did list give an insight into the stock that he carried which included apple and forest trees as well as fruit and vegetables. The most common entries were ‘sowed fir seeds’, and ‘grafted apples in the moor’ (see Figure 6:7 for a sample of the entries from Nicholls diaries).¹⁹⁹

Figure 6:7. Work done at Thomas Nicholl’s Nursery, Redruth

Date	Task
26.03.1834	Grafted apples in the moor
13.05.1834	Sowed fir seeds
18.09.1834	Whitewashed all houses
24.03.1835	Planted 25 roses in moor sent in error from Bristol
28.09.1835	Potted Ilex
27.02,1840	Planted potatoes in nursery
31.03.1840	Sowed early turnips
07.05.1840	Planted pineaster seedlings
05.03.1845	Went to market with seeds today for the first time this season
29.11.1847	Very busy taking up trees for Burncoose
25.03.1848	Sowed Guano
07.02.1849	Myself to Mr Treweeks with the seeds
13.02.1850	Sowed tree and onion seeds in the field today
31.07.1850	Begun to train Peach Trees in the field
23.01.1851	Took up and planted the roses in the moor
24.04.1851	Sowed oaks
13.05.1851	Planted kidney beans in the nursery

Source: CRO DDX 119/1-2.

What neither of these charts show is work in glasshouses, nor packaging and marketing, although Nicholls did attend a market regularly during the summer.

Another important role of a nurseryman was that of garden design. John Veitch offered a design service before and after he established his nursery. Lucombe and Pince produced plans to be implemented by head gardeners and included a laying out and planting service.²⁰⁰ Even William Mogridge, seedsman of 14 Bridge Street, advertised ‘ornamental planting executed’.²⁰¹ Although they charged for the service, and must have been working to the owners’ wishes, they became fashion setters using their influence to persuade customers to purchase the latest plants to add to their collection. Gardeners from the nursery would be contracted to do the work and if necessary to continue with the maintenance.

Devon nurserymen developed new plants for the market. This was done through a system of trials to see how a plant grew under different conditions. John Harvey suggested the interval between the first introduction of a new species and their availability and affordability through nurseries could be as long as ten years.²⁰² This may have taken even longer for some species which were difficult to get established. It was known that Pontey, for example, had problems getting the Pita seeds to germinate until success was achieved 'by macerating the seeds in water for a week previous to germinating'.²⁰³ Killerton was used for trials, as was Bicton.²⁰⁴ The advantage to the owner being that they could boast of the latest imports standing in their gardens without the necessity to purchase them and was an additional reason to keep on good terms with local nurserymen.

Having established how a plant grew and its requirements, the next procedure was to undertake hybridisation experiments to 'improve' the plant for the general market. John Dominy, John Seden and John Heal, the latter originally from Barnstaple, were hybridisers for Veitch. John Dominy began his work at Lucombe and Pince but was soon poached by Veitch to help with hybridization in their new glasshouses.²⁰⁵ He raised the first orchid hybrid to be produced in cultivation. *Calanthe* 'Dominii' in 1853. He also worked with fuchsias. Initially based at Exeter, he moved to work for Veitch in Chelsea after 1864.²⁰⁶ Robert Pince was also a noted hybridiser. The purpose of hybridisation was to make plants more floriferous, or more uniform in size, and to improve the quality and reliability of plants. If customers spent a lot of money on plants they did not want them dying as soon as they were transplanted into their own gardens or glasshouses.

Staff

Nurseries tended to have a much larger permanent staff than market gardens. This was due to the intensive nature of production for the market. Staff were needed to stoke the boilers, to care for the plants, for packaging and dispatch. Carters were used to collect manure and peat and to deliver goods to customers. A book-keeper or clerk kept track of orders, wrote invoices and corresponded with customers. Mawson marvelled that he had had the opportunity to write to Gertrude Jekyll, Dr. Hogg, Dr. Ellacombe, Robert Marnock and William Robinson while a mere clerk in an office.²⁰⁷ Managers remained in place, often for long periods. William Johnson managed the Courtney Nurseries in

Newton Abbot for 52 years, being awarded the RHS Associate of Honour Award in 1930 for his work there.

The term 'foreman' had a more important connotation in the nineteenth century. Many were not just in charge of one particular nursery department but were managers, who ran the nursery in the absence of the proprietor. Some of these men had sufficient status to be included in local directories as did George Coles and John Wotton both of Alphington Road, Exeter St Thomas.²⁰⁸ Loudon comments:

This is an important situation, the foreman being entrusted with the numbered and priced catalogues of the articles dealt in; authorized to make sales; intrusted to keep an account of men's time, &c., and in consequence it entitles the holder to the rank of head-gardener while so engaged.²⁰⁹

However, this trust was sometimes misplaced as seen by a notice inserted in the *Exeter Flying Post* dated February 23, 1824, which reads:

Lucombe, Pince & Co Nurserymen St Thomas near Exeter Beg to state for the information of their Friends and the Public at Large, that in consequence of the MISCONDUCT of their late Foreman WILLIAM FRYER, they have been compelled to DISMISS HIM from their EMPLOY; that we are necessitated to declare, *we shall not be answerable for any orders he may give in our names*, and we respectfully Caution our Friends against SETTLING ANY BILLS or PAYING HIM any MONEY on our ACCOUNT, HE HAVING BEEN DISCHARGED BY US AS AN UNWORTHY SERVANT.²¹⁰

Travelling salesmen, who often had the status of foreman or manager, took samples of seeds and plants with them on visits to other nurserymen or to private gardens or horticultural shows. They acted as salesmen and ambassadors and as the eyes and ears of a nursery, since they were in a position to see what other nurserymen were producing. Travelling salesmen from Devon included William Napper who worked for Lucombe and Pince and Frederick Brewer who was both a foreman and a travelling salesman for Veitch.²¹¹ If a client was important enough, the proprietor of the business would visit himself, dealing direct with the customer.

Commercial travellers visited other nurseries who were at the same time rivals and colleagues. They purchased plant material and seeds from each other to grow on or sell direct to customers. Thomas Nicholl in Redruth received visits from Dymond, Pontey, and Rendle from Devon. Alexander Pontey visited in 1834, 1836, 1837 and 1842, Rendle in 1834 and 1835, as did Mr Charm, traveller for Veitch, on July 14 1846. He also entertained Cornish nurserymen, and had annual visits from the traveller from a

Bristol nursery. Nicholl and his sons also travelled out of Cornwall, visiting nurserymen in London and Exeter.²¹²

Working Conditions of Nursery Gardeners

As seen in Chapter Two, nurserymen were responsible for training young gardeners, both those who went on to become estate gardeners and those who remained in the commercial sector. In similar fashion to estate gardens, trainee gardeners lived in bothies. In 1861 William Chambers, William Franklin, John Parkhouse, and William Hill aged from 19 to 22 lived in the bothy at Mount Radford Nursery. This had been home to Robert Chudley, George Richards and John Sercombe in 1851. Other trainee gardeners were lodged with foremen, journeymen or labourers who lived near the nursery. At St Thomas in 1861 four young gardeners lived with James Coombes and his family in Alphington Road: James and his son were also gardeners. These men all worked for Lucombe and Pince.²¹³

James Veitch and Son in London trained young men, many of whom later became the head gardeners of the early twentieth century:

Any out of work gardener could gain a place in the nursery for a wage of ten shillings a week, with board and lodging found. If his work was of a sufficient standard for him to be presented with a knife and an apron, then a job would be found for him in one of the many private gardens throughout the country.²¹⁴

Sons of nurserymen usually trained elsewhere other than in their family nurseries. For example, James Veitch Junior trained in London at 'Alfred Chandler at Vauxhall and William Rollinson of Tooting', specialists in camellias and heathers respectively.²¹⁵ The business network ensured that sons could gain experience in the top nurseries or travel abroad for their training.

Working gardeners in nurseries were not highly valued, and like all members of the profession were poorly paid:

My wages were six shillings a week, and no more, in consideration that I was to have instruction for the labour performed. ...Two of the gardeners had, like me 6s a week: one has 6s 6d the other three had 7s. Twenty to thirty other young men who lodged without at 8s in the hope of getting a situation through the interest of the employers. A few were master gardeners out of place, submitting to work for 9s a week in the hope of getting other situations as master. A few

were regular hands, continued from year to year at 9s a week, - men who had broken down in reputation as gardeners'.²¹⁶

In Exeter, Mr. Davey, foreman to Charles Sclater, lived in one of the lodges at the entrance to the nursery. Employed by Sclater to sell fruit and vegetables he received a wage of 7s per week, with coals, candles, and vegetables provided.²¹⁷

In common with all gardeners, workers in nurseries worked long hours both summer and winter. Thomas Mawson had to catch a train at 5.45am to be at work at Mr Wills' nursery in London, just after 6 am, although he did have half an hour for breakfast and an hour and a quarter for his lunch.²¹⁸ Glass houses were too hot for comfort, potting sheds were unheated. Not much could be done about the greenhouses, although Loudon suggested that the latter be remedied:

We should have liked the power of heating the potting shed, the men, by being rendered more comfortable do much more work, and the plants are likely to be the gainers.²¹⁹

Records for 44 businesses, where staffing numbers are known, show that most undertakings were fairly small in terms of the numbers of permanent staff employed. The majority of nurseries employed between one and five people (see Figure 6:8.). Not surprisingly, the largest employer was James Veitch who in 1851 had 47 acres of land and employed a total of 65 men and seven boys. By 1882, Lucombe and Pince, with 'a little town of glass' on its 100 acres, employed between 50 and 60 people.²²⁰ In 1851, Alexander Pontey and William Rendle of Plymouth employed 22 and 26 people respectively, the latter including two women. Joseph Morgan of Torquay had a staff of 23 employees and William Steward of Plymouth employed 20 men and 3 boys. James Sclater in 1861 employed '20 people' and in 1881 William Rossiter of Paignton employed 15 men and 8 boys. At the other end of the scale, Thomas Fursman of Bideford had just 2½ acres and 'employed his own family'.²²¹

These figures are only an indication of the total numbers working in nurseries as insufficient records have been found to give definite numbers. Neither is there sufficient evidence to show whether these numbers grew or declined over the period studied. Most nurseries employed members of their own families and this was true of Thomas Nicholl in Redruth. He employed his Uncle Edward and, when his uncle died in 1837, replaced him with a cousin, also called Edward. Not many women are listed as nursery

gardeners. Jenny Harry was named as ‘our weeder’ at Nicholls although he actually employed three women, and Nellie Turner worked as a labourer in a nursery at Sowton in 1901.²²²

Figure 6:8. Number of staff employed by nurserymen

Date	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	25-30	30+
1851	8	2	2		3	1	1
1861	3	2	2	2			
1871	1						
1881	4	6	2		1		2
1891	1	1					
Total	17	11	6	2	4	1	2

Source: Gardener database and census returns.

As seen above, the size of nurseries varied. The largest businesses were on the outskirts of London where the Bagshot and the Knap Hill Nurseries had more than 200 acres each.²²³ These acreages, whether in the London area or in Devon, were rarely all held in one parcel and comprised land both purchased and leased. The Knap Hill Nursery had at least six different sites which varied in size from 5 acres to 60 acres; the Veitch family in Devon had eleven plots of land in and around Exeter.²²⁴

Running Costs of Businesses

Without records it has been difficult to ascertain the running costs of a nursery business. Glasshouses would have been expensive to heat, stokers were needed to keep the boilers running and the houses would have needed constant repair. In the early years before heating systems were standardised, nurseries experimented with many different designs:

The troughs used by Mr. Corbett²²⁵ in the nurseries of Messrs Lucombe and Pince, at Exeter, and which Mr. Pince pointed out to us last year, and spoke in the highest terms of, are of cast-iron, 8 inches deep, 6 inches wide at the top, and 4 at the bottom. Very neat wrought-iron covers, in 3-foot lengths, are placed over them, which may be removed at pleasure, as a drier or damper atmosphere may be required.²²⁶

Packing sheds were needed to assemble plant orders, 'plants travelled in straw and mats, sometimes with moss round roots or in wicker baskets'.²²⁷ The cost of packaging to the customer varied from just a few pence to being a considerable part of the bill. In 1836 Alexander Pontey charged William Roope Ilbert a total of 7s 6d for a basket, a bag and packing. On a bill of £37.9s.2d, this was not a great deal but the previous year the 'basket, matt and packing' was charged at 5s out of a bill of £4.5s.3d.²²⁸ The cost of packaging was an integral and accepted part of the cost of the plants, which tells us that the purchasers were willing to pay the price for specific items.

Thomas Nicholl spent an average of £20 over three years in purchasing manure for his nursery.²²⁹ Both Alexander Pontey and William Rendle purchased 'black earth' (peat) from the Maristow estate which was collected from Walkhampton Common at 2s 6d a cartload. Pontey took 54 cartloads in the years 1844-45. The largest outgoing for a nurseryman would have been wages. Nicholls paid out an average of £131.5s a year for three permanent staff and five casual staff. This was 53 per cent of his annual outgoings. Individual wages varied from thirteen shillings a week to twenty-six shillings a month.²³⁰ His son John was paid £52 a year, the equivalent of a head gardener's salary. Other expenses included rent, tithes, rates, income and other taxes plus purchase of stock, the latter accounting for thirteen per cent of his annual costs. His discounts and expenses of collecting annual accounts came to almost ten per cent.

Nurserymen would have found it hard to prosper without the financial support of landowners and charities. The Exotic Nursery in the King's Road, Chelsea, bought by James Veitch in 1853, had been founded by Joseph Knight, a head gardener to George Hibbert a merchant and a keen plant collector who traded with the West Indies. He supported Knight from 1808 by giving him plants from his own garden. When Hibbert died in 1837, Knight bought his collection of plants, hence the name of the nursery.²³¹ It was probable that William Lucombe was supported financially by Thomas Balle at Mamhead; as he had been a former gardener there 'for many years'.²³² Sir Thomas Dyke Acland had supported Veitch at Killerton and it was an Acland who loaned £320 to James Sclater in 1867.²³³

Nurserymen leased their land from the gentry, the aristocracy and charities; they also borrowed money to purchase a lease or freehold. Landlords included the Guardians of the Poor in Exeter, George Watson of Rockingham Castle, The Reverend Richard

Mason, Mark Kennaway and William Thomas at Raleigh House.²³⁴ Thomas Hutchings, of Axminster, had a mortgage of £200 from The Lyme Regis Oddfellows which was paid back over a period of six years with five per cent interest.²³⁵ Thomas Roberts, in 1847, had a mortgage of £450 from Edward Yelland to acquire 8½ acres at St Budeaux.²³⁶ The Radcliffes of Warleigh House, Tamerton Foliot leased land to both nurserymen and market gardeners. The leases were unusual in that there were two levels of rent set, a peacetime rate and a high rate if 'in war', to be paid quarterly in equal payments.

For most land the rental term was usually seven, fourteen or 21 years but land could be held on an annual tenancy. James Veitch had one plot of land on an annual tenancy as did Mrs Sercombe in Exeter.²³⁷

Formerly *leases for life* were very common here [in Devon], having been granted generally by necessitous landlords for nominal rents, and the value of the land at about 18 years' purchase. Of late, leases for lives have been discontinued, and in their stead have been generally substituted *leases for years*.²³⁸

One drawback to short leases was that at the end of each term they were put to the highest bidder. This did not lead to security of tenure and were a disincentive to invest in the land, in particular in buildings or stock that took years to grow to maturity. Leases do show that in certain cases that nurserymen had the right to remove buildings, trees and plants which were placed on the land during the tenancy. In other cases the incoming tenant had to pay for the manure in the ground, or purchase 'timber now growing on premises...at a fair valuation.'²³⁹

Within a three mile radius of Exeter agricultural rents in 1850 were from 30s to 50s per acre.²⁴⁰ Rent for nursery land was generally more expensive than purely agricultural land. Those who had large quantities of land and were farmers as well as growers such as Mary Ann Baker of Axminster and Samuel Bale of Landkey, paid agricultural rates of £1.5s an acre. However, for most nurserymen the price of land varied from the £4.16s an acre that Susannah Hull paid in Tamerton Foliot in 1819 to £11.12s an acre paid by Arthur Bustard on land rented in St Sidwell from the Guardians of the Poor in 1872. This could still be considered to be cheap land when compared with Robert Glendinning of the Chiswick Nursery, London who, in 1867, paid £90 per annum for 'a piece of nursery ground, about 4a 1r 0p'.²⁴¹ This equated to just over twenty guineas (£21) an acre.

There were frequent restrictions on leased land. These included hunting, shooting and fishing rights which remained with the landlord, as did mineral rights.²⁴² The lessee was required to 'keep in good complete and substantial repair all and every part of demised premises.'²⁴³ In 1897 William Henry Sclater's lease stated he was required to paint the outside of his greenhouse and shed with one coat of good oil colour every year and inside once every 4 years.²⁴⁴ The land had to be kept in good heart and sometimes the manure was specified:

To spread before the first crop shall be sown, fifty double Winchester bushels of good well burnt stone lime to be afterwards mixed with earth or 200 seams of good well rotted stable dung in lieu thereof.²⁴⁵

Amos Groombridge was 'not to use garden or cottage for a tea house nor sell spirituous alcohol nor carry on any trade in the said dwellinghouse'.²⁴⁶

Nurserymen had a symbiotic relationship with land-owners. Alexander Pontey of Plymouth, for example, leased a field for at least twenty-two years from 1833 to 1855 from the Ilberts at Bowringsleigh for between ten and eleven pounds a year, while at the same time supplying the estate with trees, bulbs, seeds and plants.²⁴⁷ He also bought 'black earth' from Maristow and supplied trees, manure and seeds for Maristow and Roborough gardens.²⁴⁸

Competition

Apart from overt competition at horticultural shows, competition in business was also expressed through tenders for orders. In 1895 Saltram ordered 10,000 larch, 2,000 mixed firs, 1,000 Silver Fir, 1,000 Corn Ash, and 1,000 English Oak at a total cost of £7.7s from William Wiseman in Forres, Scotland, carriage paid, 'sent down the west coast route as the Gt Westn Ry people do not now allow us to send traffic for stations on their line via London as I used to do for quickness'. These were little more than seedlings being from 1½ foot to 2 foot in height. Wiseman assured Mr. Holmes the Agent that the trees would come to no harm as 'they are carefully packed'.²⁴⁹ He quoted for a further order for 16,000 Scotch Firs at 22s 6d per 1,000 delivered free.²⁵⁰ Quotations from William Bray of Okehampton at 25s per thousand for small trees, and 32s 6d and 45s from Robert Veitch, made it worthwhile to have them shipped all the way from Forres despite a possible delay in delivery.²⁵¹ Goods weighing less than a ton could take five or six days in transit. Heavier items took two days to travel the same

distance and nurserymen often dispatched orders to several customers at a time to make up the weight.²⁵² The cost of trees from Veitch would have been twice that of those from Forres. Either his success and his overheads led him to price himself out of the market, or he had decided he did not wish to fulfil this particular order.

The timing of advertisements was crucial. Nurserymen who sold mostly forest trees would advertise during the autumn and winter which was the best time for transplanting trees with a degree of success. There were advertisements for spring bulbs and the latest bedding plants in season. Advertisements were also a way of informing as many people as possible what was happening to a nursery before postage became cheap enough for general postal communication. Change of ownership was one item that was important enough to be communicated through the newspapers. For example in 1796 John Lucombe, grandson of the first William Lucombe, bought the premises of Joseph Ford following his demise, although Ford's widow continued to run the business for at least a year following his death.²⁵³ This must have engendered a source of satisfaction for the Lucombe family as these two nurseries had been rivals for many years. John Lucombe in 1807 also had 'lately much increased their long established Nursery on the Alphington and Plymouth Road, St Thomas, Exeter, by addition of the ready furnished Nursery Ground, lately belonging to William Ford and Son', thereby acquiring land of yet another previous rival.²⁵⁴

Wealth

Nurserymen were highly competitive among themselves, although they could just as easily close ranks and support each other against those on the edge such as market gardeners and aspiring nurserymen like Vanstone in Exeter. Perkin maintains that this was part of membership to the middle class:

[The middle classes] were in some ways more segregated and exclusive than 'society' itself, because they could not afford to be so tolerant of infiltrators and 'freeloaders', or, rather, its various layers and segments were mutually and plurally exclusive, with minutely refined gradations of status, expressed not only in dress, style and location of house, number of servants, and possession of personal transport in the form of a riding horse, carriage and pair or pony and trap, and other visible possessions, but in the intangible rules about who spoke or bowed to, called on, dined with or intermarried with whom.²⁵⁵

Wills illustrate the wealth of nurserymen, where they had invested their time and fortunes and how they distributed their wealth. The purchase and building of property was not only an outward manifestation of wealth, but was also the equivalent of money in the bank to be used as a pension fund, an investment which could be leased or sold when times were hard, or passed down to widows and children. When William Ford died in 1829 he left eleven houses to be sold, many of them newly built, and several with four or more bedrooms. All had been let to provide a source of income. He also had long-term leaseholds to be sold on nursery-garden plots, this despite being bankrupt only three years earlier.²⁵⁶ Money left to daughters often had a clause 'not to be subject to the control of any husband'.²⁵⁷ This, at a time when the wife's property automatically became the property of a husband, allowed some protection of funds and provided some independence for women. It also demonstrates the importance of keeping money, property and the business within families to enable the family to keep the place in society which had been so hard won.

Nurserymen appeared in lists of voters, had bank accounts, and enhanced their status by fulfilling important civic roles in society.²⁵⁸ George Cox was a member of the Board of Guardians at Exeter, Robert Pince was appointed to St Thomas Board of Health, and Alexander Pontey was a Councillor.²⁵⁹

The number of servants kept was also an indication of wealth. This was true for a nurseryman's customers, but equally so for aspiring middle class nurseryman and head gardeners:

All who could kept servants, since in the labour-intensive Victorian middle-class home, with its still large if diminishing family, coal fires and kitchen range, heavy laundry work and overfurnished rooms, comfort depended on service.²⁶⁰

Joseph Morgan of Torquay had two house servants as did Alexander Pontey. Samuel Bale of Landkey had a cook, a housemaid and general servant in 1881.²⁶¹ Robert Taylor Pince proprietor of Lucombe and Pince, was a widower when he died. He left money to the people who had worked closely with him before his death. These included his servants who each received £10, and members of his workforce. Harriet Ashford his housekeeper received £600 which was the same amount as his late wife's niece and more than most of the other legatees. He left £50 to John Chown who had worked for the nursery for at least twenty years as a labourer, packer and groom and £50 to his book-keeper. He also left £50 to his foreman Samuel Randall, but rescinded that in a

codicil as Randall had left to start up his own business in competition with Lucombe and Pince. The majority of his estate was left to his nephew and successor William Robert Woodman.²⁶²

Summary

The backing and encouragement of local landowners created psychological and moral support which enabled nurserymen such as Veitch, Pontey and Lucombe to experiment with new plants in order to remain at the top of their profession. The Veitch nurseries remained successful largely because their plant hunters ensured a steady supply of exotics to appeal to the most avid of collectors. They also had sufficient wealth to retain experts such as skilled hybridisers and designers. Frederick Meyer who worked for Veitch for thirty years created rock gardens from Oundle in Northamptonshire to Bystock near Exmouth; the articles and books that he produced all enhanced the reputation of his employers.²⁶³

More than one hundred nurseries were listed in the 1897 *Kelly's Directory*, some of these were third generation such as the Allwards in Torquay and the Bales of Landkey. Many nurseries lasted for several generations, handed down through family or business links where land was sold or leased to other nurserymen. Land that had been regularly tended and manured was productive; purpose built buildings already on site did not need capital investment for initial building, only for maintenance and replacement. This helped stability as purchasers remained loyal to a site as well as a name. Those on the outskirts of towns survived the longest, there being less threat from urban expansion, but the placing of nursery sites within easy reach of town centres ensured a steady supply of customers who visited to admire the plants and place their orders.

As knowledge increased, propagation became easier and mass production methods led to reduced prices of seeds and plants bringing them within the price range of a much wider range of customers, while expensive rare plants ensured some exclusivity for their wealthier customers. It was a balancing act that the nurseries had to maintain to please all people all of the time. The more successful nurseries had wide markets, both for purchase and sale of material, operating on a local, regional, national and international level. Those nurseries which did not diversify, or could not move with changing fashions in plants, such as the Southwoods went out of business.²⁶⁴

Nurseryman also influenced what was grown in most of the gardens in Devon during the nineteenth century. Relationships with head gardeners, carefully cultivated, led to the placement of orders for seeds, equipment, plants and trees. Nurserymen used every device available to them to generate interest from their wealthy customers, from advertisements in the local press to demonstrating their products at horticultural shows and in shops on their premises.

Without nurseries many young gardeners would not have had such a good start in their careers, nor would they have found jobs in prestigious gardens. However, in order to benefit their own businesses, nurserymen had a vested interest in keeping wages low. They could have used their undoubted influence with their customers to ensure that gardeners had a decent working wage and infinitely better working conditions, but they did not.

Nursery proprietors formed part of the successful merchant-class. Some, like the Dymonds in Exeter and the Nicholls of Redruth, were non-conformists, putting their energies into business interests. Through their catalogues and books or as judges at horticultural shows, they educated the general public into what was fashionable, they instructed their customers in what was important and what was not. Competitors in business, but supporters of each other when necessary, as individuals, nurserymen were very influential in the gardening world. An ostentatious display of wealth demonstrated the success of the major nursery families as ‘unquestionably at the head of their profession’.²⁶⁵

¹ J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London, 1822), 1216.

² Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (London, 1989), 23.

³ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1216.

⁴ For example William Craggs at Clyst St Mary, Henry King at Upton Pyne and George Moundsden at Lifton.

⁵ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1201.

⁶ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1201.

⁷ *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post (EFP)* 20.11.1817, 4c; Nott, Hewett & Co stated ‘seeds procured from best markets’, and ‘can warrant accuracy and growth’ see also *EFP* 4.02.1836, 2d.

⁸ T. K. Hodder, ‘Suttons at Reading’ in *The Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society (JRHS)*, 89, 5 (1956) Reprint, 1.

⁹ *EFP* 28.11.1816, 3d; 30.11.1828, 3d.

¹⁰ *Census (1851): population tables, part II: ages, civil condition, occupations and birthplaces of the people* (PP 1854 lxxxviii, vol 1); *Census (1881) Volume III, Ages, condition as to marriage, occupations and birth-places of the people* (PP 1883, lxxx).

¹¹ *Census (1891) Volume III, Ages, condition as to Marriage, Occupations, Birthplaces and Infirmities* (PP 1893, cvi); *Census of England and Wales (1901) Summary Tables, Area, Houses & Population; also*

population classified by Ages, Conditions as to Marriage, Occupations, Birthplaces, and Infirmities (London, 1903).

¹² Census (1841) Population, Occupation Abstract (PP 1844 xxvii); Census (1851): population; Census (1861): Population tables, vol II ages, civil condition, occupations and birthplaces of the people (PP 1863, liii, pt 1); Census (1871): population tables, vol III: population abstracts: ages, civil condition, occupations and birth-places of people (PP 1873 lxxi, pt 1); Census (1881) Vol III, ages.

¹³ Census PRO HO107 Sidmouth, 1851; PRO RG9 Exeter St Thomas and Tamerton Foliot, 1861.

¹⁴ United Devon Association, *The Book of Fair Devon* (Exeter, 1899-1900), 21.

¹⁵ *Fair Devon*, 60.

¹⁶ Hazel Conway, *Public Parks* (Princes Risborough, 1996), 65.

¹⁷ *The Handbook of North Devon, with A Trip on the Crediton and North Devon Railways* (Exeter, c1858), 42; William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon* (*White's Directory*), 1878-9.

¹⁸ See Kelly's, *Directory of Devonshire* (*Kelly's*) 1866, 1873, 1883, 1889, and 1897: Pigot and Co., *National and Commercial Directory and Topography Devonshire* (*Pigot's Directory*) 1844 and *White's Directory* 1850 and 1878.

¹⁹ DRO 3004A/PFA 215.

²⁰ EFP 07.08.1834, 2f; 06.06.1850, 8e; 01.08.1850, 5d; 17.03.1880, 8c.

²¹ EFP 17.03.1836, 2c.

²² Source: Directories of Devon from *Pigot's Directory* (1830) to *Kelly's* (1897).

²³ See *Kelly's* (1866 and 1873); *White's Directory* (1878); Morris & Co. *Directory and Gazetteer: Devonshire* (*Morris's Directory*) (1870) and Census PRO HO107, RG9-11 Exeter, Winkleigh and Beaford 1851 to 1881.

²⁴ *Kelly's* (1883); Census PRO RG11 St Sidwell, 1881. When widowed Ann Soper became a fruit and flower dealer.

²⁵ Census PRO RG11-12 Exeter St Thomas, 1881, Newton Abbot, 1891.

²⁶ Malcolm Thick, 'Garden seeds in England before the late eighteenth century: I. Seed growing', *Agricultural History Review* (*AgHR*), 38, I, 58-71, 58.

²⁷ *Kelly's* 1889; *Kelly's* 1866.

²⁸ EFP 07.10.1824, 4e.

²⁹ Census PRO RG10-12 Axminster, 1871, 1881, 1891; *Kelly's* (1889).

³⁰ At Covent Garden women earned just '1d or 2d a peck for shelling peas, or 6d a basket for walnuts; they do well if their labour earns them 10d or 1s per day'. See Andrew Mearns, 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor' (1883) in Octavia Hill, *Homes of the London Poor* 2nd edn (London, 1883), 13.

³¹ Census PRO HO107, St Saviour Parish, 1851.

³² Census PRO RG11 1881.

³³ DRO 62/9/3/40/8.

³⁴ Census PRO RG11-12 Kensington 1881, St Alban's 1881, Lambeth, 1891.

³⁵ EFP 15.11.1882, 4c.

³⁶ *Gardener's Chronicle* (*GC*) 14.10.1871, 1330.

³⁷ E. J. Willson, *West London Nursery Gardens: the nursery gardens of Chelsea, Fulham, Hammersmith, Kensington and a part of Westminster, founded before 1900* (London, 1982), 6.

³⁸ Sue Shephard, *Seeds of Fortune: A Gardening Dynasty* (London, 2003), 22-23, 279.

³⁹ Cornwall Record Office (CRO) CY/1093, Cuerel supplied plants and seeds from 1869 to 1882.

⁴⁰ PWDRO 1345/57.

⁴¹ PWDRO 1345/59, 62.

⁴² PWDRO 74/729 and 74/uncatalogued, Kitley; PWDRO 69/M/6/116 Saltram; CRO CY/1093 Pentillie.

⁴³ *Kelly's*, (1897), p73; *The Garden* 30.11.1895, 427; *Devon Weekly Times* (*DWT*) 22.11.1895, 5b.

⁴⁴ *Morris' Directory* (1870).

⁴⁵ John Harvey, *Early Nurserymen* (London, 1974); Suzanne Treseder, *A Passion for Plants: The Treseders of Truro* (Penzance, 2004).

⁴⁶ James H. Veitch, *Hortus Veitchii* (London, 1906); Audrey le Lièvre, 'To the Nobility and Gentry About to Plant': Nurseries and Nurserymen' in Steven Puglsey (ed.), *Devon Gardens: An Historical Survey* (Stroud, 1994), 91-105.

⁴⁷ Shirley Heriz-Smith, 'The Veitch Nurseries of Killerton and Exeter, Part 1 c1780 to 1863', *Garden History* 16:1 (1988), 42-57; and 'James Veitch & Sons of Exeter and Chelsea, Part 2 1853-1870', *Garden History* 16:2 (1988), 135-153.

⁴⁸ Shephard, *Seeds of Fortune*.

⁴⁹ See for example, Trevor Wood, 'Notes on raisers of Devon Plants', *NCCPG Devon Group Newsletter*, Summer (1995) 5-6; N. G. Langdon, 'Lucombe, Pince & Co – Lucombe Oak (*Quercus Lucombeana*)' in *NCCPG Devon Group Newsletter*, Autumn (1995).

- ⁵⁰ CRO DDX 119/1, June 28th 1838; DDX 119/2 September 7th 1846; September 24th 1846.
- ⁵¹ EFP 2.03.1843, 3a.
- ⁵² EFP 01.05.1828, 2d.
- ⁵³ *Torquay and Tor Directory and General Advertiser*, 11.09.1846, 2a.
- ⁵⁴ Glass tax was not removed until 1845.
- ⁵⁵ EFP 02.03.1820, 1d.
- ⁵⁶ DRO QS/34/148a; QS 32/261; QS/32/303; QS 32/344a and 336.
- ⁵⁷ DRO QS/32/217:352:376; *Devonshire Chronicle* (DC) 4.3.1851, 4e; DWT 8.03.1851, 8a.
- ⁵⁸ DC 4.3.1851, 5a.
- ⁵⁹ DRO 62/9/3/67/42b.
- ⁶⁰ EFP 11.01.1851, 6c/d.
- ⁶¹ EFP 12.10.1848, 4b; 27.09.1855; 8f, 23.11.1854, 5e; See also EFP 28.10.1847, 3f, John Hooper, Honiton.
- ⁶² Their stock consisted of forest trees, so they were apparently selling the right product.
- ⁶³ EFP 13.03.1817, 1a, George Huxham, North Huish; EFP 29.06.1815, 4b; 21.09.1815, 4e.
- ⁶⁴ F.M.L. Thompson, *Gentrification and the Enterprise Culture: Britain 1780-1980* (Oxford, 2001), 18.
- ⁶⁵ EFP 3.07.1845, 3f; 27.09.1855, 8f.
- ⁶⁶ EFP 21.10.1824, 4d; 01.12.1825, 1a.
- ⁶⁷ GM 8 (1832), 129-130.
- ⁶⁸ DRO 62/9/3/67/29a-b; 62/9/3/40/8.
- ⁶⁹ John Harvey, *Early Gardening Catalogues* (London, 1972), 2.
- ⁷⁰ Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 5.
- ⁷¹ John Evelyn, *Sylva, or a Discourse of Forest-trees, and the Propagation of Timber* (London, 1664), 115.
- ⁷² Stephen Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica: or, The Nobleman, Gentleman and Gardener's Recreation* Vol 1 [London 1718] (New York & London, 1982), 208, 211.
- ⁷³ Malcolm Thick, 'Seed Growing', 69.
- ⁷⁴ DRO 346M/F221-2, F295, F379.
- ⁷⁵ DRO 48/13/1/14/17; DRO Z1/10/758 and DRO Z10/42.
- ⁷⁶ DRO 1148M 1784-85 'Gathering acorns'; 'Picking fir cones for seed'.
- ⁷⁷ DRO 346M/E10; DRO 346M F273, 310, 311, 318, 333, 337, 363, 424.
- ⁷⁸ DRO 346M/E10.
- ⁷⁹ DRO 346M/F222, F379.
- ⁸⁰ DRO 346M/F222.
- ⁸¹ DRO 346M/F448 April 1762 Nicholas Rowe to Sir Francis Drake.
- ⁸² CRO DDX 119/1 Feb 18 1834.
- ⁸³ Clinton Devon Estate Archives, Land Agents Letter books, Book 3/190 and 235.
- ⁸⁴ Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London, 1986), 190, 224.
- ⁸⁵ Joan Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture: A History From the Black Death to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1997), 51.
- ⁸⁶ EFP 16.11.1826, 1b; 4.12.1814, 4c, Chown and Addiscott.
- ⁸⁷ PWDRO 69/M/6/154, 156.
- ⁸⁸ EFP 9.01.1817; 16.01.1817, and 23.01.1817, 4d.
- ⁸⁹ DRO 316M add3/FA7/75; 316M add 3/FA12/32.
- ⁹⁰ PWDRO 69/M/6/44/99-157.
- ⁹¹ John Hawkins, 'On the advantages of planting Forest-Trees amongst Furze' in *The Technical Repository* 5, (1824), 132, 210-213.
- ⁹² DRO 316M add3/FA7/75.
- ⁹³ GM 18 (1842), 156.
- ⁹⁴ CRO DDX 119/2 (1845-6).
- ⁹⁵ William Marshall, *The Rural Economy of the West of England* 2nd edn Vol. 1 (London, 1805), 213.
- ⁹⁶ Marshall, *Rural Economy*, 213.
- ⁹⁷ PWDRO 74/762; DRO 316M/EA/15; 867B/E2/9/1.
- ⁹⁸ NDRO B172/16; EFP 24.08.1848, 1b.
- ⁹⁹ DRO DD6658/Correspondence 1810/7.
- ¹⁰⁰ DRO DD6658/Correspondence 1810/1 Charles Scott to Thomas Hare January 6 1810.
- ¹⁰¹ DRO 316M add 3/FA7/75; PWDRO 874/21/1 Folio 178 (1834).
- ¹⁰² Robert Newton, *Eighteenth Century Exeter* (Exeter, 1984), p146.
- ¹⁰³ W. G. Hoskins, *Two Thousand Years in Exeter* (Sussex, 1963), 96.
- ¹⁰⁴ Newton, *Eighteenth Century*, 146.
- ¹⁰⁵ EFP 21.10.1824, 4d.
- ¹⁰⁶ EFP 16.02.1826, 4d.

- ¹⁰⁷ EFP 17.11.1831, 2b.
- ¹⁰⁸ EFP. 15.04.1830, 3d. Three walled gardens advertised as building land. EFP 18.02.1880, 1a.
- ¹⁰⁹ M. C. Lowe, 'Devon Local Carriers', *The Devonshire Association Report and Transactions* 130 (1998), 111-136, 120.
- ¹¹⁰ *Torquay and Tor Directory, & General Advertiser* 28.08.1846, 2c.
- ¹¹¹ DWT 04.01.1895, 1a.
- ¹¹² CRO A/2/149/1-9 Trelaske family, Cornwall.
- ¹¹³ *The Floral Cabinet and Magazine of Exotic Botany* 2 (1838), 91-100. Pontey raised *Ipomoea Schedeana* named after Dr. Schiede. Once established, seeds were sent from Pontey's to Botanic Gardens and other Nurserymen. Other seeds trialled at Ponteys included the rouge plant from Caraccas, sent by Mr Fanning, which produced a red pigment see GM 8 (1831), 99.
- ¹¹⁴ *The Times* 3.09.1827, 4c.
- ¹¹⁵ Letter from W. Hamilton, Plymouth dated August 5th 1831 entitled 'The Pita de Guataca, a plant affording a valuable Fibre for Cordage &c.,' in GM 8 (1832), 240-241.
- ¹¹⁶ GM 10 (1834), 596. Samples of ropes made from the pita plant were compared for strength with those made from hemp.
- ¹¹⁷ GM 6 (1830), 526.
- ¹¹⁸ John H. Harvey, 'Early Nurseries at Exeter', *Garden History Society Newsletter* 24 (1988), 17-18, 17.
- ¹¹⁹ Robert T. Pince, 'An Account of some remarkable Trees now growing at Mamhead, the Residence and Property of R.W. Newman, Esq., situated about Eight miles from Exeter' in GM 11 (1835), 127-132, 132.
- ¹²⁰ John and George Telford, *A Catalogue of forest-trees, fruit trees, ever-green and flowering shrubs, sold by John and George Telford, nursery-men and seeds-men, in Tanner-Row, York* (York, 1775), 7.
- ¹²¹ EFP 14.10.1813, 1d.
- ¹²² *Besleys Directory*, (1835); *White's Directory*, (1850), 91; John Caldwell, 'A Provincial Horticultural Society', *Devonshire Association Transactions*, 92 (1960), 104-115, 110-111.
- ¹²³ Caldwell, 'Horticultural Society', 112.
- ¹²⁴ GM 11 (1835), 488. Quotation from a long report in EFP, 25.06.1835, 4a/b/c, sent to Loudon by a correspondent from Exeter.
- ¹²⁵ NCCPG, *The Magic Tree: Devon Garden Plants History and Conservation* (Exeter, 1989), 17.
- ¹²⁶ *The Magazine of Horticulture, Botany and All Useful Discoveries and Improvements in Rural Affairs* (Boston, 1857), 23, p130.
- ¹²⁷ GM 17 (1841), 86.
- ¹²⁸ GM 17 (1841), 86.
- ¹²⁹ DRO DD6658/1811/10; *The History of the Parsonage at Chevithorne* unpublished notes; NDRO B172/16; DRO 867B/E8/1; PWDRO 69/M/6/116; DRO 867B/E2/9/1; DRO 4243M/E78; S. Heriz-Smith 'Veitch Nurseries Part 1', 41-57; NDRO B170 add/127; DRO Z19/20/36; DRO 2547M/E64; Todd Gray, *The Garden History of Devon: An Illustrated Guide to Sources* (Devon, 1995), 204; DRO 1392M/119/34/3; GM 12 (1836); SRO DD\SF/4249.
- ¹³⁰ DRO 1148M 1784-5, January 22 1784 'to Exeter with the young Thorns to W Lucombe and to bring things in return'.
- ¹³¹ Anne Acland, *A Devon Family* (London, 1981), 22-25.
- ¹³² Gray, *Garden History*, 100 (Escot); DRO 346M/E386 (Nutwell Court).
- ¹³³ Heriz-Smith, 'Veitch Nurseries part 1', 43-45.
- ¹³⁴ Heriz-Smith, 'Veitch Nurseries part 1', 41; Shephard, *Seeds*, 50.
- ¹³⁵ EFP 15.04.1830, 3d.
- ¹³⁶ EFP 15.04.1830, 3d; *The Gardener's Magazine* 14.10.1882, p546.
- ¹³⁷ EFP 8.09.1791.
- ¹³⁸ Shephard, *Seeds*, 50.
- ¹³⁹ Heriz-Smith, 'Veitch Nurseries Part 1', 46.
- ¹⁴⁰ Shephard, *Seeds*, 123.
- ¹⁴¹ Shephard, *Seeds*, 135.
- ¹⁴² Shephard, *Seeds* 133-4, 163-4.
- ¹⁴³ EFP 23.03.1815, 4c; 09.10.1828, 2c.
- ¹⁴⁴ EFP 15.10.1835, 1b.
- ¹⁴⁵ EFP 16.12.1769; 23.10.1778, 2c; 3.03.1796, 3c; 16.11.1797, 1c; 23.03.1797, 1c; 23.03.1815, 4c; 15.10.1835, 1b; 28.01.1836, 3f; *Census* PRO HO107, RG9 Exeter, 1851 and 1861.
- ¹⁴⁶ W. G. Hoskins (ed.), *Exeter Militia List 1803* (Chichester, 1972), 95-6, 102.
- ¹⁴⁷ EFP 01.07.1824, 4e.
- ¹⁴⁸ DRO D6/10/1; EFP 21.02.1828, 2e.
- ¹⁴⁹ EFP 6.03.1834, 3a. DRO D6/10/2.
- ¹⁵⁰ Art IV. 'Report on rare or select Articles in certain British Nurseries and private Gardens' in GM 19 (1843), 34-40, 38-39.

- ¹⁵¹ *Census* PRO RG11 Exeter St Thomas, 1881.
- ¹⁵² DRO 3004A and adds/PFT 92, 94; DRO 3004A and adds PFA 208, letter from James Sclater to Trustees of Heavitree Charity dated 28 February 1852.
- ¹⁵³ DRO 3004A/PFA 219, December 6 1879.
- ¹⁵⁴ DRO 1142M add/1/T8/24.
- ¹⁵⁵ *GM*, 19 (1843), 309-10.
- ¹⁵⁶ *EFP* 20.06.1850, 8e; *Illustrated London News* 3.08.1850.
- ¹⁵⁷ *EFP* 24.08.1848, 1b.
- ¹⁵⁸ *EFP* 20.06.1850, 8e.
- ¹⁵⁹ PWDRO 2666/10.
- ¹⁶⁰ *EFP* 29.04. 1852, 4c/d.
- ¹⁶¹ *Census* PRO RG9 Weston Peverill, 1861.
- ¹⁶² *GM* 18, (1842), 546.
- ¹⁶³ *The Picture of Plymouth* (Plymouth, 1812), 205.
- ¹⁶⁴ See *The Forest Pruner or Timber Owner's Assistant. A Treatise on the Training or Management of British Timber Trees; Whether Intended for Use, Ornament, or Shelter; Including an Explanation of the Causes of Their General Diseases and Defects With the Means of Prevention, and Remedies, Where Practicable: Also an Examination of the Properties of Oak Woods* (1800). He also wrote *The Profitable Planter* (Huddersfield 1808) and *The Rural Improver* (1822).
- ¹⁶⁵ PWDRO 864/25; 72/296; 74/729; DRO 316M add 3/FA7/54, 75; 69/M/6/112; 69/M/7/28.
- ¹⁶⁶ PWDRO 1145/57.
- ¹⁶⁷ *EFP* 16.10.1834, 2c.
- ¹⁶⁸ DRO 53/6 Box 103/6.
- ¹⁶⁹ *GM* 18 (1842), 546-547.
- ¹⁷⁰ *Billings Plymouth Directory* (1857), 35; *The Times* 31.03.1860, 5a.
- ¹⁷¹ Perkin *Rise of Professional*, p5.
- ¹⁷² CRO CY/1093; DRO 69/M/6/116.
- ¹⁷³ DRO L1258M/V4/4/4, 21.
- ¹⁷⁴ John Harvey, *Early Horticultural Catalogues: A Checklist of Trade Catalogues issued by firms of Nurserymen and Seedsmen in Great Britain and Ireland down to the year 1850* (Bath, 1973), iii.
- ¹⁷⁵ *The Floricultural Cabinet and Florists Magazine* 01.1857, 134.
- ¹⁷⁶ *EFP* 04.01.1882, 5d.
- ¹⁷⁷ In the Papers of Alfred Burrow Esq, County Coroner, Cullompton there are catalogues for William Bray and Sons of the Dartmoor Nurseries at Okehampton, for G. Frost of Bampton, together with details from Clibrans of Hale, Altrincham and John Hill & Sons of Stone in Staffordshire. See DRO 4244M-0/T/1/29.
- ¹⁷⁸ DRO 3004A/PFA 215 n.d., but on reverse a letter dated 7 Oct 1865.
- ¹⁷⁹ *Billings Plymouth*, 35.
- ¹⁸⁰ Jane Loudon, *Gardening for Ladies: with a Calendar of Operations and Directions for Every Month in the Year* 7th edn (London, 1846), 203.
- ¹⁸¹ CRO DDX 119/2.
- ¹⁸² *DC* 13.05.1851, 1a.
- ¹⁸³ PWDRO 74/729; DRO 867B/E2/9/1; DRO Z19/20/36.
- ¹⁸⁴ Willson, *West London Nursery Gardens*, 49.
- ¹⁸⁵ Established in 1895, one hundred policies had been issued in the first four months of business, to cover 6,720,832 square feet of glass, valued at £80,542.2s.3d., see *The Garden*, 21.06.1895.
- ¹⁸⁶ PWDRO 74/729 invoice to E. R. Bastard at Kitley.
- ¹⁸⁷ Sensitivus of Yorkshire, 'On the Treatment which Gardeners out of Place generally receive from the Nurserymen, and the Consequences resulting there from' in *GM* 2 (1827), 36-38.
- ¹⁸⁸ CRO DDX 119/1-2.
- ¹⁸⁹ James Veitch and Son, *A Catalogue of Select Stove Plants, Aquatics, Greenhouse Plants, Camellias, Azalea Indica, and Ericas* (1853), 4.
- ¹⁹⁰ A Lady, *Every Lady's Guide to her own Greenhouse, Hothouse, and Conservatory: Instructions for cultivating plants which require protection* (London, 1851), 23.
- ¹⁹¹ *GM* 10 (1834), 595.
- ¹⁹² DRO 62/9/3/40/8.
- ¹⁹³ *EFP* 3.10.1816, 4d
- ¹⁹⁴ DRO 62/9/3/67/29a.
- ¹⁹⁵ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1217.
- ¹⁹⁶ Marshall, *Rural Economy*, 213.
- ¹⁹⁷ J. C. Loudon 'Report on rare or select Articles in certain British Nurseries and private gardens', *GM* 19 (1843), 34-39.

- ¹⁹⁸ EFP 21.01.1880, 1c.
- ¹⁹⁹ Nicholls used land as part of his nursery which he refers to as 'our Moor(e)' for plants which included 'shrubs, flowers and roses'.
- ²⁰⁰ PWDRO 74/729, invoice to E. R. Bastard at Kitley from Alexander Pontey.
- ²⁰¹ EFP 17.11.1836, 2d.
- ²⁰² John Harvey, *Restoring Period Gardens* 2nd edn (Princes Risborough), 17.
- ²⁰³ Letter from W. Hamilton, Plymouth dated August 5th 1831 entitled 'The Pita de Guataca, a plant affording a valuable Fibre for Cordage &c.,' in *GM* 8 (1832), 240-241.
- ²⁰⁴ *Bicton Park Botanical Gardens Newsletter* 11 (2004), 5.
- ²⁰⁵ Veitch, *Hortus Veitchii* 99-100.
- ²⁰⁶ Veitch, *Hortus Veitchii*, 99-100.
- ²⁰⁷ Thomas H. Mawson, *The Life and Work of An English Landscape Architect* (1927), 17-18.
- ²⁰⁸ *White's Directory* (1878).
- ²⁰⁹ Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, 1200.
- ²¹⁰ EFP 23.02.1824.
- ²¹¹ DC 4.3.1851.
- ²¹² CRO DDX 119/1-2.
- ²¹³ Census PRO HO107, RG9 for Exeter St Thomas and Heavitree, 1851, 1861.
- ²¹⁴ *The Times*, 22.05.1958, 12f.
- ²¹⁵ Heriz-Smith, 'Veitch Nurseries Part 1', 47-8.
- ²¹⁶ Alexander Somerville, *The Autobiography of a Working Man* (London, 1848), 148.
- ²¹⁷ EFP 18.12.1828, 3a.
- ²¹⁸ Mawson, *Life and Work*, 15.
- ²¹⁹ *GM* 7 (1831), 356.
- ²²⁰ The Exeter Nursery in EFP 21.06.1882 taken from GC.
- ²²¹ Census PRO RG11 Bideford, 1881.
- ²²² CRO DDX 119/1-2; Census PRO RG13 Sowton, 1901.
- ²²³ E. J. Willson, *Nurserymen to the World: The Nursery Gardens of Woking and North-West Surrey and plants introduced by them* (London, 1989), 13, 25.
- ²²⁴ Willson, *Nurserymen*, 11.
- ²²⁵ A former foreman of Ponteys.
- ²²⁶ Charles McIntosh, *The Book of The Garden, Vol 1. Structural* (Edinburgh & London, 1853), 199-200.
- ²²⁷ Willson, *West London Nursery Gardens*, 5.
- ²²⁸ DRO 316M add 3/FA14/48; DRO 316M add3/FA14/20.
- ²²⁹ CRO DDX 119/2; PWDRO 874/3/50.
- ²³⁰ Wages paid to gardeners 'out of place' but working in Lee's nursery in London amounted to 12s a week – see *GM* 3 (1828), 468.
- ²³¹ Willson, *West London Nursery Gardens*, 49.
- ²³² Pince, 'Remarkable Trees', 127-132.
- ²³³ DRO 1148M add/1/78/25.
- ²³⁴ PWDRO 407/200, 262, 282 Reverend Walter Raleigh to John Brown; DRO D6/34/2 Guardians of the Poor to Arthur Bustard; EFP 7.09.1815, Lord Courtenay to Robert Gay; PWDRO 1122/220 George Lewis Watson to Amos Groombridge; PWDRO 1345/58 Reverend Richard Mason, to Pontey and Serpell; DRO 1148M add/1/78/21 William Thomas to James Veitch.
- ²³⁵ DRO 5156B-O/T/2.
- ²³⁶ PWDRO 81R/4/8/1.
- ²³⁷ EFP 5.08.1877, 1b; DRO 1148M add/1/78/21.
- ²³⁸ *White's* 1850, 35.
- ²³⁹ See NDRO BC/154/38; 1142B/T3/1; PWDRO 1345/58; DRO 3004A/PFA 220; 3004A and adds PFT 92; EFP 11.07.1816, 1d.
- ²⁴⁰ *White's* 1850, 35.
- ²⁴¹ *The Times* 01.03.1867, 12b.
- ²⁴² PWDRO 407/200
- ²⁴³ PWDRO 407/200
- ²⁴⁴ DRO 62/9/2 box 1164.
- ²⁴⁵ PWDRO 407/200
- ²⁴⁶ PWDRO 1122/220 Tothill Garden Nursery, Plymouth.
- ²⁴⁷ DRO 316M/EA/15, 19 & 20; 361M add 3/FA10/39; 361M Add3/FA14/21-22, 48.
- ²⁴⁸ PWDRO 874/3/56.
- ²⁴⁹ PWDRO 69/M/6/44/99, 116.
- ²⁵⁰ PWDRO 69/M/6/44/128.
- ²⁵¹ PWDRO 69/M/6/44/117, 131.

²⁵² PWDRO 69/M/6/44/160.

²⁵³ EFP 3.03.1796, 3c; 25.05.1797, 3b.

²⁵⁴ EFP 22.10.1807, 1b.

²⁵⁵ Perkin, *Rise*, 81.

²⁵⁶ EFP 21.01.1830, 2c.

²⁵⁷ PWDRO 1302/416.

²⁵⁸ See, for example, William Addiscott, Thomas Fryer, Sampson Reynolds, Charles and John Sclater, John Richard and William Southwood, and James Turner in 1832; Henry Addiscott, Arthur Bustard, William Hayman, John Heard, Robert Pince, Charles, Edward, George and James Sclater and Robert Veitch in 1864. *A List of the Voters at the Exeter Elections which took place Dec 10 and 11 1832* (Exeter 1833) and *Besley Directory*, (1864).

²⁵⁹ EFP 23.11.1854, 5e; *White's* (1850).

²⁶⁰ Perkin, *Rise*, 78.

²⁶¹ *Census* PRO RG11 Landkey, 1881.

²⁶² DRO 53/6 Box 103/6.

²⁶³ GC 09.04.1881, 474-475; *The Garden*, 18.08.1906, 74.

²⁶⁴ Bolhay nurseries established by 1771, stock mostly forest trees.

²⁶⁵ *GM* 19 (1843), 63.

CONCLUSION

The principal aim of this thesis has been to chart the increasing professionalisation of gardeners, especially those at the top of their career, and to clarify and quantify the part played by these men in the development of gardens and horticulture in the nineteenth century within the county of Devon. This was an exciting era for gardening with many houses and gardens being remodelled or created in the county. Towns expanded, providing homes in suburban villas; the wealthier middle-classes bought small estates and built their own country houses. Gardens echoed the ambitions of an increasingly urban society, nostalgic for country living, 'inspired in part by the conviction that the countryside was morally and physically healthier than the towns',¹ but who wanted to avail themselves of all the new plants and inventions available to those who could now afford them. The overfull, eclectic gardens of the Victorian nouveau riche could not have been achieved without an articulate, knowledgeable and professional manager to care for the garden and his input into the development of a growing horticultural industry.

The climate of the south-west enabled a wide variety of gardening practices. The sea-ports created a market for produce and were the means whereby plants were brought into the county from around the world; many were trialled in Devon before reaching London and other parts of the country. Tourism brought ideas into the region and demands for leisure activities in parks, public and winter gardens. Those who overwintered or spent the summer season in the county, in villas on the coast, created employment opportunities for jobbing and private gardeners and a market for nurserymen and market gardeners. Much of the interest in gardening, which spread across and down through the classes, was fuelled by contemporary horticultural journals, pamphlets and gardening books. Gardening came to be seen as a healthy hobby and a benefit to many. Workhouses and industrial schools taught the practical craft of gardening. Asylums encouraged gardening among their patients as a therapeutic activity which benefited both mind and body.

Overall there are two noticeable recurring themes throughout this period which applied nationally, not just in Devon. Firstly, the conspicuous consumption of the middle-classes which drove forward the gardening industry, and secondly the emphasis on education, both of the garden owners and those employed in gardening, manifesting

itself in a new approach to training and opportunities for those employed as gardeners. The new-found purchasing power of businessmen, the clergy, and professional men, led to a corresponding growth in commercial gardening. Specialist nurseries, already part of the commercial society, supplied gardens and houses with 'exotic' plants. They widened their business interests from plants to ancillary products contributing to and becoming part of the expanding British Empire. Market gardeners supplied basic foods and luxury items, not only to an expanding urban population without land of their own, but also to those whose horticultural interests moved away from purely food production to display of new plants in arboreta, pleasure grounds and glasshouses. As they sought to widen their markets, they changed from small family run enterprises to compete with nurseries as successful commercial concerns. The increase in the number of all gardeners both private and commercial throughout the nineteenth century echoed the expanding fortunes and leisure time of the masses. Employment of a head gardener who exhibited at horticultural society shows became a sign of middle-class scientific education and affluence.

This thesis has looked at an area not previously researched in Devon. It acknowledges the vast numbers of men, and women, employed within the horticultural industry and has added to our knowledge of the working lives of gardeners. Whilst some of those at the top of their profession in Devon have been documented, most notably Barnes at Bicton and the Veitch family of Killerton and Exeter, as David Stuart noted, 'very little at all is known of the immense numbers of apprentices, journeymen and jobbers, or of the itinerant boys, children and old women employed to pick caterpillars from the vegetables'.² Through the use of new material, based on a wide variety of primary sources including the census and estate records, this study has gone a long way to address that situation, especially in recognition of those who worked in the burgeoning commercial sector. The large database, compiled from these sources, helps to bring previously unknown people to life. More than fifteen thousand men, women and children have been traced who were involved in gardening during the nineteenth century in Devon alone. Some trained as gardeners and remained in the profession all their lives, but others used gardening as a short term career, moving in and out of the profession as necessary. This was especially true of garden labourers, boys and women. Gardening also lent itself as a secondary occupation to many artisans where jobs were seasonal, or which could be undertaken alongside their other work, these included

thatchers, miners, inn-keepers, butchers and carriers; dairymen had small plots of land for production of fruit, flowers and vegetables.

This study gives an insight into the investment needed to become a professional gardener. This included the practical training, often paid for through premiums to top head gardeners in prestigious gardens, and the length of time, and the number of physical moves needed to climb the career path from garden boy to head gardener. Movement within different branches of the industry was encouraged and men frequently moved from private establishment to the commercial sector and back again. Although seemingly these were discrete areas of work, in fact, they were linked through a network of head gardeners, nurserymen and garden workers.

Many men worked and studied for long hours, albeit their achievements did not merit the monetary rewards or improvements in terms and conditions that might have been anticipated by comparison with other commercial or industrial sectors such as engineers, lawyers and architects for example. Working conditions did not improve substantially throughout the period studied. The accommodation offered to single gardeners was frequently poorer than that of the plants that they cared for. Bothies remained cramped, dark and damp without facilities right through into the twentieth century.³

Gardeners were also for the most part self-supporting, their isolation in their work did not encourage the formation of unions or protective, professional societies, such as those suggested by Perkin as necessary to enhance the professionalisation of an occupation.⁴ The few organisations such as the United Gardeners' Benevolent Society, that did exist to help in times of sickness and retirement, forbade financial contributions after a gardener had reached thirty-five. As it was not until they were this age that they became settled financially, many men had maintenance problems as they aged.⁵ Despite efforts in the horticultural press, and the formation of garden associations, gardeners never banded together for protection and self-help in the way that other artisans did. Therefore their concerns were never addressed by employers.⁶ However, for a few élite gardeners, notably head gardeners and top nurserymen, as with other 'achievers' in the Victorian era, their education and specialisation led to financial reward and an enhancement in their status in what was an increasingly class based society. The success

of the few, Paxton, nationally, Barnes and Veitch locally, written about in horticultural journals, set the standard of aspiration for increasingly skilled horticulturists.

Trainee gardeners were educated internally within estate or nursery gardens by instruction from their superiors and through making use of whatever journals and books were available. External education was increasingly implemented through visits to, and study at, botanical gardens, horticultural colleges, and with other gardeners. As Loudon maintained in 1827:

a gardener cannot be even moderately acquainted with his profession, or fit for even an ordinary situation as master without, 1. Such a preliminary or elementary education as will prepare his mind for deriving instruction from reading; and 2. A course of reading, both varied and extensive, on the subject of his profession.⁷

If the Royal Horticultural Society examinations had been available in Loudon's time, he would have doubtless suggested studying for them as they acted as tangible proof of time and effort put into acquiring the best education possible and therefore enhancing a gardener's professionalism. Those who had education succeeded, those who had not, did not. However, education was not just about attaining and keeping a satisfactory position, it was also useful for the communication of knowledge and new ideas. It enabled head gardeners to talk with both garden owners and to manage a garden staff. It also helped to reinforce the differences between garden labourers and career gardeners, and kept career advancement exclusive to those who put in the time and the effort to obtain the best education possible. Victorian values of ambition, education, hard work and determination had the potential to lead to success which, in turn, led to economic security and independence.

By the 1870s a clearly defined career path for professional gardeners had been determined. Gardeners had to be able to prove they were capable of understanding botanical and practical skills and that they were able to specialise in one department if necessary. In order to do this, they committed their time, energy and money to gain a practical, theoretical and social education which helped them progress to a successful future. By the end of the century the training of apprentices was no longer the sole prerogative of head gardeners. Technical schools and horticultural colleges provided tuition for the RHS examinations.⁸ These were open to anyone prepared to undertake two years study and included amateurs and women. Top head gardeners continued to train apprentices and journeymen. They also used their experience and knowledge to

educate and inform those less knowledgeable through their writing and as judges at horticultural shows.

The spread of theoretical knowledge of horticulture increased the number of men seeking jobs within the industry, but with working gardeners split into two discrete groups, garden labourers and career gardeners. The garden labourers, men and women, are often dismissed as unskilled workers but frequently had specific skills such as pruning and grafting.⁹ As the increasing use of chemicals and mechanisation of tasks reduced the need for menial labour, women were seen less frequently in private gardens, their place being taken by garden boys and labourers, although they still had their place working alongside family members in market gardens and nurseries.¹⁰

Changes in technology had the biggest impact on a gardener's working life, although overall tools, equipment and methods changed little. The introduction of chemicals for pest control was welcomed, but as labour was cheap and plentiful the old methods of hand-picking slugs, snails and caterpillars continued into the twentieth century.¹¹ Filling an ice-house was no longer necessary as it was cheaper to buy 'artificially-made ice ...at a cost of one penny or less per pound.'¹² Mechanical improvements which influenced working practices included the invention of the lawn-mower, although few are recorded in Devon until the 1880s.¹³ The rapid spread of glasshouses, led to a need for specialist botanic skills of indoor gardening. Nurserymen diversified into production of fertilisers and new manures; this led to enhanced productivity in all gardens.

Despite the respect in which many gardeners were held, this was not demonstrated in their wages and salaries, nor for the lowlier gardeners, in their social status. Although a garden labourer had been elevated above an agricultural worker, it was only by a small amount. Even within the industry there was a two-tiered system. Jobbing or temporary gardeners who worked in nurseries while looking for a permanent position were paid less than regularly employed workers. Men in nurseries and market gardeners were paid double the overtime that was paid in private gardens. Holidays were almost non-existent, and apart from being allowed to leave a little earlier on a Saturday afternoon by the end of the century, working hours hardly changed and remained similar well into the twentieth century. There was little provision for hobbies and leisure activities that were not directly concerned with their gardening life. Some gardeners played cricket for the estate or village team, this was accepted as part of their job in the same way as they

were expected to take on a variety of tasks from serving in the house or acting as a fireman when required.

A low wage was one factor that kept gardeners working well into their old age, mobility in their profession meant that they did not always make provision for the future. Many worked well into their seventies, but gardeners during this period were long-lived, more than twelve per cent lived to be seventy or more (see page 92). The outdoor lifestyle combined with access to fresh vegetables and fruit helped.

By the beginning of the twentieth century it was the college trained middle-class women who were beginning to compete with professional gardeners for positions in the garden. The availability of a large pool of labour was one of the reasons why a gardener did not command the pay which recognised his education, skills and abilities.

The increasing numbers of professional garden journeymen, foremen and head gardeners were recognised by society for their competence and understanding of their business. The top men in private gardening were the professional head gardeners who had reached the peak of their profession. They successfully fulfilled a management role overseeing the production of produce for the family, but also bringing kudos to a garden owner through skills of plant propagation. It has been shown that, in Devon, head gardeners remained in one garden longer than the average elsewhere, but that they might have had to move many times before finding a settled situation. It was possible, especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to rise from humble beginnings to become a top head gardener or proprietor of a nursery or market garden business, but by the end of the century, due to the demands of the profession, it was only educated apprentice gardeners, or very determined men who could reasonably expect to become successful, especially as their career structure became more exclusive.

Head gardeners were very influential in the region's horticulture encouraging garden owners to experiment with different fruit and vegetables and in educating the lower classes in the importance of growing a wider range of produce in allotment and kitchen gardens. In much the same way that Darwin changed the thinking about heredity and the animal kingdom, a select group of head gardeners changed our knowledge of plants, their habits and requirements, through years of experimentation and observation. They also changed the way that plants were traditionally grown.

It is impossible to talk about gardeners without considering the horticultural industry as a whole. Each branch of the profession was interdependent, supplying and sharing plant material, men and expertise. Men trained in one area and worked in another. Head gardeners ran their own nurseries. Nurserymen employed their own private gardeners. Those who worked in Devon at the same time would have known each other or of each others achievements and formed an amorphous network. This led to a conflict between competition and co-operation.

The effect of the Exeter nurseries on the gardens of their day should not be underestimated. It has long been known that they supplied all the more important gardens in the county, firstly with trees for plantations and later with a large variety of plants and seeds. This study has now shown that many nurseries had a symbiotic relationship with their customers, frequently renting their land and purchasing peat from their wealthy patrons. The Veitch family and their employees, especially F. W. Meyer, who became famous for his rock gardens, have left their legacies across the county. with a large input into the design of many of its gardens, parks and cemeteries. They also had an important role in the training of many of the county's head gardeners.

John Harvey began the study of Exeter nurserymen in the 1970s, especially those of the eighteenth century, but was reticent about nurserymen based in Plymouth and elsewhere.¹⁴ Later studies of the Veitch nurseries also ignore the influence and connections of a host of other lesser known businesses. This research has highlighted the importance of two Plymouth nurseries, Pontey's and Rendles, who supplied the west of the county and Cornwall, and who were responsible for bringing the study of botany to the masses through their botanic gardens, for supply of tools and equipment, for trialling plants for industry and the development of hot-house heating systems.¹⁵ These men were known about nationally during the nineteenth century, but their businesses have never been the subject of study. The work and products of the smaller nurseries, and the majority of market gardens, fare even worse being, for the most part, totally forgotten.

This study has sought to fill gaps in the meagre knowledge of the role of market gardeners. Many were often little more than small-holders so were considered subservient to farmers who were thought of as respectable yeomen. They were however, mostly independent and self-sufficient. The efficient use of small plots of land with

intensive production methods ensured a good profit which allowed them to compete strongly with nurserymen, so much so that boundaries between the two professions became blurred. Some market gardeners became nurserymen, others like the Sclaters in Exeter were known as both nurserymen and market gardeners.¹⁶ Market gardeners became successful as urbanisation created a demand for good quality produce sold locally especially where the middle-classes used their limited space to concentrate on ornamental rather than productive gardens. Market gardening was often a secondary occupation for miners. This meant that gardens were frequently based in areas where there had previously been a thriving mining industry such as Combe Martin and Bere Ferrers.

Because of the large number of gardeners looked at in this study, of necessity, not every aspect of a gardener's career has been fully investigated. More work needs to be done on the relationship between head gardeners and their employers, many of whom were competent amateur gardeners themselves. The contribution made by head gardeners to developing individual species within the county has only been briefly touched upon. Due to lack of space and time, little work has been done on a comparison with gardeners elsewhere, either within Britain or across the world, such as those who worked in Europe, America, India and Australia. However, this research has opened up areas of discussion on the similarities and differences within the horticultural industry, although there is scope for further and more detailed work of the commercial industry within the county. Although the large number of nurserymen and market gardeners who worked in the county during the nineteenth century has been highlighted; apart from those who worked in Exeter, most have been forgotten. The links of working gardeners with smallholders and allotment tenants is another area which should be considered, as would further work on the effects of competition between all branches of the commercial horticultural industry.

From the middle of the nineteenth century to 1914 was the period that saw the rise of professionalism within the gardening industry in response to the demand for knowledgeable men by wealthy garden owners. However, the First World War showed private gardeners a different way of life and taught them new skills; many were not prepared to return to the service industry. By the end of the war there was no longer the need for such large numbers of career gardeners, nor, with the loss of so many men during the war, an availability of garden labourers.¹⁷ Estates were broken up and sold,

leisure time increased, gardens became smaller. More people undertook their own gardening helped by modern equipment. Over the next century, garden owners and gardens evolved to what we know today. Working head gardeners today may receive better financial rewards and terms of employment than in the nineteenth century, but few are held in such high esteem. It has been the commercial gardeners, the nurseries and some market gardens which have survived throughout the twentieth century and evolved into the garden centres and automated market gardens of today.

¹ Jeremy Burchardt, *Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change in England since 1800* (London, 2002), 3.

² Toby Musgrave, *The Head Gardeners: Forgotten Heroes of Horticulture* (London, 2007), Chapter 8; Shirley Heriz-Smith, 'The Veitch Nurseries of Killerton and Exeter, Part 1, c1780 to 1863', *Garden History* 16:1 (1988), 41-57; 'James Veitch & Sons of Exeter and Chelsea, Part 2, 1853-1870', *Garden History* 16:2 (1988), 135-153; Sue Shephard, *Seeds of Fortune: A Gardening Dynasty* (London, 2003); David C. Stuart, *Georgian Gardens* (London, 1979), 149.

³ Arthur Hooper, *Life in the Gardeners' Bothy* (Suffolk, 2000)

⁴ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (London, 1969), 255.

⁵ *Gardener's Chronicle* 3.02.1855, 65.

⁶ *The Gardener's Magazine* 13.01.1872, 13-14.

⁷ J. C. Loudon, 'Catalogue of Books for a Garden Library', *Gardener's Magazine* 2 (1827), 108-20', 109, 110.

⁸ See for example, Stafford Technical School, Swanley Horticultural College and Chelmsford County Technical Laboratory,; also in Devon The Devon School of Gardening at Ivybridge.

⁹ DRO 3610Z and add/1; DRO 1508M Devon Estate/Labour Book V1.

¹⁰ *The Garden* 8.03.1890, 237.

¹¹ DRO 3610Z and add/1-2.

¹² Robert Thompson, *The Gardener's Assistant: A Practical and Scientific Exposition of the Art of Gardening in all its Branches* New edn William Watson, ed., (London, 1900), 215.

¹³ North Devon Record Office (NDRO) B170 add/91.

¹⁴ John Harvey, *Early Gardening Catalogues* (London, 1972); *Early Nurserymen: with reprints of Documents and Lists* (London, 1974).

¹⁵ *Gardener's Magazine (GM)* 19 (1843), 505; J. C. Loudon, *Arboretum et fruticetum britannum or The trees and shrubs of Britain* (London, 1854), 2328.

¹⁶ See also Henry Fouracre at Heavitree James Bulley at Dawlish and John Andrews of Plymouth.

¹⁷ DRO 3610Z and add/1-4

GLOSSARY

Money

4 farthings ($\frac{1}{4}$ d)	= 1 penny
2 halfpennies ($\frac{1}{2}$ d)	= 1 penny
12 pence (12d)	= 1 shilling
20 shillings (20s)	= £1
1 guinea	= £1. 1s

Shillings and pence decimal coinage equivalents

1d	$\frac{1}{2}$ p	1s 7d	8p
2d	1p	1s 8d	8 $\frac{1}{2}$ p
3d	1p	1s 9d	9p
4d	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ p	1s 10d	9p
5d	2p	1s 11d	9 $\frac{1}{2}$ p
6d	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ p	2s	10p
7d	3p	2s 6d	12 $\frac{1}{2}$ p
8d	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ p	2s 9d	14p
9d	4p	3s	15p
10d	4p	4s	20p
11d	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ p	5s	25p
1s	5p	7s 6d	37 $\frac{1}{2}$ p
1s 1d	5 $\frac{1}{2}$ p	10s	50p
1s 2d	6p	12s	60p
1s 3d	6p	15s	75p
1s 4d	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ p	18s	90p
1s 5d	7p	20s	£1
1s 6d	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ p	£1 5s 0d	£1.25p

Linear Measure

40 rods, poles or perches	= 1 rood
4 rood	= 1 acre
1 acre	= 4,840 sq. yd = 0.405 hectare

Capacity Measure

1 pint = 20 fluid oz	= 0.568 litre
1 quart = 2 pints	= 1.136 litres
1 gallon = 4 quarts (8 pints)	= 4.546 litres
1 peck = 2 gallons	= 9.092 litres
1 bushel = 4 pecks	= 36.4 litres

APPENDIX I

The Gardener Database

Material from the gardener database has been gathered from a wide variety of sources, but the majority of the information has come from the census enumerators' returns from 1841 to 1901. Other sources include estate records, contemporary newspapers and journals especially *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*. Devon *Directories* have also been useful for cross referencing. These include *Kelly's* and *White's*.

Headings used in Database

Last name: spelling standardised where possible.

Forename:

Other names: (included here are different spellings and alternative names used).

Sex: male or female.

Age: to help with identification of individuals with similar names. First column contains age when first noted as gardener. Second column includes later ages from census or other source.

Parish 1: first parish where gardener worked.

Parish 2: later parishes where gardener worked including out of county areas.

Occupation: first column for text, second and third column coded for ease of sorting

Notes 1: for information of particular relationships of interest or house/nursery where gardener worked.

Parents occupations:

County of Birth: includes county or country.

Parish of Birth:

Dates: Earliest and latest, including, where known, date of death.

Wives: Name, age, parish of birth, maiden name if known.

Wives Occupation:

Children: Name, age, place of birth, later occupations if known.

Notes 2: Includes addresses, references, comments.

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North Devon Journal

Proceedings of the Royal Horticultural Society 1

The Times

Trewman's Exeter Flying Post

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